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CHRISTIAN COURIER
A Reformed Weekly

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Agency helps poor countries with seeds, ideas

Alan Doerksen

NORTH FORT MYERS, Fla. and OAKVILLE, Ont. — While some relief organizations help out the poor in developing countries by sending out shipments of food, the Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization (ECHO) uses a unique blend of ideas, seeds and technical expertise to assist farmers in the developing world.

ECHO has its headquarters at a small farm in North Fort Myers, Florida, and recently opened a Canadian office in Oakville, Ont. Several Canadian interns and volunteers have been working with ECHO since it started its work in the late 1970s.

According to Ruth Bartel, ECHO's office manager in Fort Myers, "Our main purpose is to provide agricultural ideas and seeds to agricultural missionaries." She describes ECHO as "an agricultural extension service for the tropics."

ECHO helps missionaries working in 140 countries, mainly in the tropics, but does not work directly in those countries, explains Bartel. ECHO is interdenominational and works with a wide variety of mission organizations. Biblically, ECHO takes its inspiration from Ephesians 4:12: "... To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

One of ECHO's main projects is its demonstration farm in North Fort Myers, which is used for seed production and for growing plants for educational purposes, says Bartel. The farm features some unusual types of tropical fruit not found in most grocery stores. Before working at ECHO, comments Bartel, "I had no idea about the tropical fruit trees that existed." ECHO regularly gives tours of its farm to interested people.

Enlisting termites

At the farm, ECHO produces seeds for 450 unusual varieties of food plants which have the potential for producing under difficult conditions, such as very dry or very hilly areas.

Each November, ECHO hosts an agricultural missions conference, which brings together missionaries, scientists and agricultural workers from around the world for personal networking.

ECHO also publishes a quarterly technical newsletter, "ECHO Development Notes," which contains information gathered from its farm and from other agricultural sources. ECHO sends the newsletter, which is published in English and Spanish, free of charge to missionaries and agricultural development workers.

Recently, ECHO published a book called *Amaranth to Zai-holes: Ideas for Growing Food Under Difficult Conditions.* The book is based on ECHO's first 51 newsletters. Bartel explains that "zai-holes" are an agricultural technique developed in Africa where a hole is dug in the ground and filled with organic material that attracts termites. Later on, this hole will be transformed into a fertile place for planting. This is one of the unconventional farming techniques which ECHO passes on to others.

ECHO staff members answer hundreds of technical questions each year and present many of their ideas and solutions on ECHO's home page on the Internet.

Over the past few years, several young Canadian interns have been working with ECHO. One is Heather Lekx of St. Catharines, Ont., who graduated from the University of Guelph with a degree in environmental science. Since May, Lekx has been working as a "nursery intern" on ECHO's demonstration farm. Among other duties, she *See* **ECHO** *p. 2...*

Rooftop gardening, one of the unusual farming techniques used at ECHO's demonstration farm in North Fort Myers, Florida.

PHOTOS COURTESY ECHO

An agricultural missions conference in Haiti, hosted by ECHO this past January.

Haitians eating sugar-coated bricks to kill hunger pains

AKRON, Pa. (MCC) — "Times are getting harder in Haiti. Hunger is spreading in the countryside and into the city as the spring rains did not arrive in time to save the bean and corn crops. Many market women in downtown Port-au-Prince are now selling bricks of clay covered with a little sugar; people are eating the bricks to kill their hunger pain," writes Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Haiti co-director Dan Wiens.

Although several large food-aid programs are operating in Haiti's hardest-hit northwest area, workers report some of the poorest of the poor are "falling through the cracks." MCC is helping 200 of these impoverished families, who are still hoping for a September harvest.

MCC has provided $10,350 Cdn. ($7,370 US) to long-time missionaries Carol Ann and George Truelove who, along with personnel from two other partner mission agencies, are purchasing food locally and distributing it to people in danger of dying from starvation without such assistance.

MCC funds are buying rice, beans, oil and salted fish; the Trueloves and their colleagues are making six distributions every two weeks. They are also distributing MCC canned beef. Some MCC beef is already in Haiti and another shipment of 1,900 kilograms, valued at $11,800 Cdn. ($8,400 US) is on its way now.

'Sustainable' efforts

MCC workers in Haiti's northeast, in the Bwadlorens zone, continue to concentrate on local leadership development for ongoing programs in agriculture *See* **MCC** *page 2...*

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News

ECHO explores experimental farming techniques

KAREN LIGTHEID

Tim Bootsma at ECHO's farm with a Maramba bean.

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helps manage the farm's fruit tree arboretum, also known as the "edible landscape nursery."

She also works with "alley-cropping," where food plants are grown between rows of trees, and helps to sell fruit trees and fill out seed orders — two of ECHO's fundraising methods.

At present, seven interns work at the farm, and most live in residences on-site. "Everybody shares cooking duties," explains Lekx.

'Hands-on' training

Lekx will be working at ECHO's farm until next May, when she will travel to Haiti to work on a demonstration farm there for three months. That farm is run by a Haitian agency with close ties to ECHO. Lekx sees her work with ECHO as a good opportunity for "some hands-on training."

Recently Tim Bootsma, from Port Dover, Ont., completed an internship with ECHO and went on to do further "field work" in Haiti. Bootsma, who has a degree in plant science from Dordt College, worked in ECHO's semi-arid greenhouse from April 1996 until this spring.

Mike Fennema, from Troy, Ont., interned with ECHO in 1991, after getting his agriculture degree from Dordt. Following his year at ECHO, Fennema worked with Food for the Hungry in Cambodia, teaching villagers experimental methods in agriculture designed to make them more self-reliant. After his work in Cambodia, Fennema returned to ECHO in March 1996 as its first missionary-in-residence. This position involved assisting senior staff and making formal presentations to technical staff.

Moves north

Last September, ECHO Canada was created, largely due to the work of Jack and Dorothy Ritchie, a retired couple from Oakville, Ont., who have a Florida winter home near North Fort Myers. In 1996, the Ritchies first visited the ECHO farm while taking a gardening course in Florida. "I was very impressed with the approach and offered my services," says Jack Ritchie, who worked in the

COURTESY HEATHER LEKX

Heather Lekx

1980s for the United Nations World Food Program as the regional bureau manager for Asia.

ECHO staff responded by asking Ritchie to investigate how to set up a Canadian branch of the agency. This was partly because several Canadians have been working with ECHO and partly because some Canadians were supporting ECHO financially but were not able to get tax-deductible receipts.

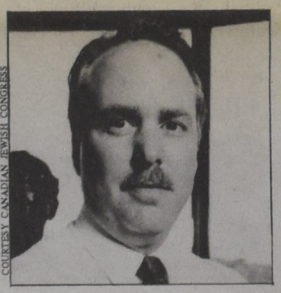
The Ritchies set up the ECHO Canada office at their Oakville home and have now helped ECHO Canada achieve charitable status. Currently, they are working to build up a support base for ECHO in Canada.

Canadian Jews protest alleged war criminals

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — Members of Ontario's Jewish community have been protesting in front of the homes of suspected Nazi war criminals to raise public consciousness of this issue and to quicken government action in prosecuting and deporting the suspects.

Bernie Farber, of the Canadian Jewish Congress, explains that the Jewish community is holding the demonstrations because of frustration with the government's slowness to deal with this issue.



COURTESY CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS

Bernie Farber

Treated as everyday cases

"It has taken so long to get the federal government moving and then when cases get before the courts, they're treated as normal, everyday cases. But these are extraordinary cases," insisted Farber, speaking to the *Globe and Mail*. "They deal with elderly people who are alleged to have committed some of the most heinous crimes in the annals of human history."

In late July, 200 people held a demonstration in front of the condominium on Yonge Street just south of Finch Avenue where suspected war criminal Konrads Kalejs lives. The protest was organized by the Jewish Congress's Holocaust Remembrance Committee.

Another protest was held May 5 outside the North York home of suspected war criminal Erich Tobiass, 84, and a third protest was held at the Burlington home of Juozas Kiseilaitis, an alleged Nazi officer in Lithuania during the Second World War.

Andrew Barron, Canadian director of Jews for Jesus, personally agrees with the Jewish Congress's strategy. But he stresses that Jews for Jesus does not deal directly with the issue of alleged Nazi war criminals living in Canada.

Messianic Jews 'no better than Hitler'

"We're strictly an evangelistic agency," he says, adding that the agency does not work together with the Jewish Congress.

"The Canadian Jewish Congress would find us offensive," says Barron. "The congress would say that what we do is no better than what Hitler did." Some Jewish Canadians are upset with the work of Jews for Jesus, which focuses on reaching out to Jews with the message of Christianity.

But speaking as a Jewish American, Barron says, "I think you would find that most Jewish people in Canada would agree with" the Jewish Congress's strategy of actively protesting against alleged war criminals.

Barron added that none of his immediate family died during the Holocaust. "I don't have any direct loss... Most of my family had immigrated to Canada [before the Holocaust.]"

On a related issue, Barron was critical of the Swiss banks which recently published in newspapers around the world a list of dormant accounts whose owners they claim to be unable to locate. Barron says it would be "relatively easy" to find the heirs of the accounts.

But one problem faced by Jews who held accounts in Switzerland was related to the Holocaust, explains Barron. Holocaust survivors have been unable to claim the assets of accounts held by their family members who died in Nazi death camps. The reason for this is the banks required death certificates, which, of course, were not issued at the camps.

MCC offers training, aid to Haitians

... continued from page 1

and health. They believe this work will reduce the causes of crop failure and hunger in the long run.

Fourteen veterinary agents, for example, recently completed a course in animal husbandry, including how to give vaccinations. "This has been some of MCC's finest work in the zone, as animals are so vitally tied to people's existence," notes MCC worker Rebecca Kurtz.

"Several foreigners and Haitians from a U.S. mining corporation 'set up shop' for a couple of weeks in Bwadlorens earlier this year," Kurtz relates. "They noticed as they walked the ravines and stream beds for gold samples that there was no fecal matter by the rivers here, unlike every other area they had been in in Haiti. This was testimony to our sustainable health work and latrine promotion."

MCC has eight workers in Haiti, with openings for five more. In addition to rural work in agroforestry and health, workers in the capital serve with children's programs and support the development of Haitian organizations seeking solutions to their country's problems.

No Issue on August 15, 1997

In keeping with our no-issue schedule (see box on page 5), we will not publish an issue on August 15, 1997.

News

Seafarer's mission practises hospitality, quiet diplomacy

Valerie Walker

HALIFAX — Everything about Halifax's Halterm Container Terminal is big, loud and heavy. Eighteen-wheelers and small diesel trucks service the container pier and the huge ships that come into port. Train tracks crisscross pavement, and conduits from the grain elevator stretch over stacks of shipping containers. Set against the backdrop of mammoth machines and nondescript container stacks is the tidy white and blue trailer of the Missions to Seamen. If the flags are flying, visitors are welcome.

The mission was established in 1858. With headquarters in London, England, this Anglican ministry has a presence in approximately 300 ports worldwide. The Halifax mission opened in 1941.

Dr. Brian Evans has been the chaplain at the Halifax mission since early June. He is still getting to know the port of Halifax, but has a long history in ministry to seafarers, most recently in Montreal.

Along with a chapel and chaplaincy services, the Halifax mission offers a canteen, shuffleboard and darts, karaoke and a warm welcome that seafarers seek out time and time again. Seafarers make between 7,000 and 8,000 visits per year to the mission, with many repeat visits. A big drawing card is a phone system that allows international calls. "We have several phone lines," explains Evans, "and our computer system times the call and calculates the charge so that each call is paid for in cash."

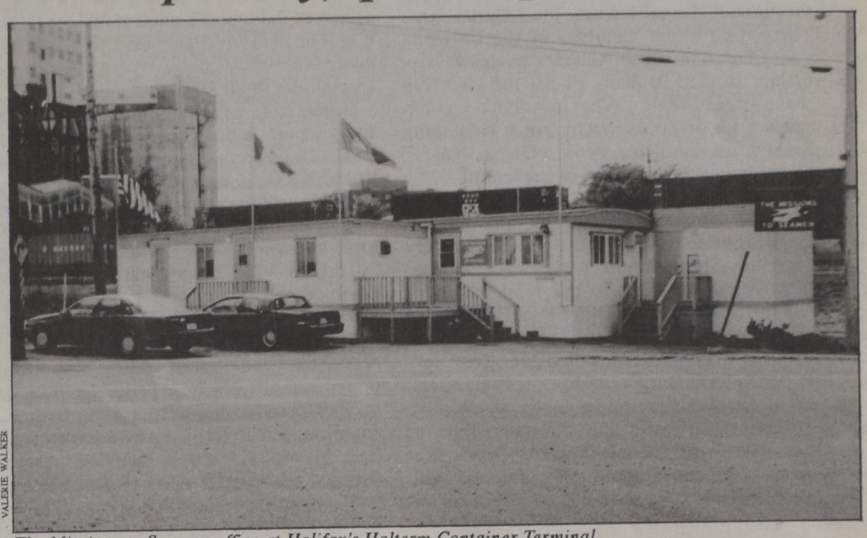
True hospitality

Being the chaplain is not a desk job. Evans transports seafarers to and from the mission by car, which means driving around the harbor frequently. He listens to seafarers' problems and plans. Frustrated seafarers sometimes talk of immigrating to Canada. Then Evans shows them the unemployment statistics and discusses why they want to come. Recently he counselled a seafarer who had already moved from an Eastern bloc country to the Middle East and wants to come to Canada.

Return visits to port allow mission chaplains to develop ongoing relationships with seafarers. Evans' time in the office is punctuated with greetings and goodbyes from visiting seafarers. A host of volunteers, men and women, devote time to fundraising and visiting with the seafarers who come to the mission. It is a quiet ministry offering true hospitality which goes unnoticed by much of the greater community in Halifax.

Advocacy for seafarers

Another part of the mission's work involves advocacy for seafarers. In the fall of 1996 the plight of seafarers on commercial vessels came under the spotlight when Filipino seafarers from the Taiwanese ship, the *Maersk Dubai*, alleged that Romanian stowaways had been thrown overboard.



VALERIE WALKER

The Missions to Seamen office at Halifax's Halterm Container Terminal.

The Taiwanese officers alleged to have issued the orders were arrested in Halifax and then released. Since Canada does not have jurisdiction in this case, the murder allegations remain unresolved. The Filipino crew members who alerted the authorities via a pastor in Houston feared for their families'safety; the families are now in hiding. Filipinos and other concerned people have taken up the cause of supporting the seafarers and their families.

The *Maersk Dubai* case highlighted the vulnerability of seafarers and the need for advocacy services. Chaplains in seafarers' missions are perfectly poised to listen when seafarers need someone to trust.

In order to reach seafarers effectively and to get his own sense of the state of affairs on the ships, Evans tries to go aboard every commercial ship that comes into Halifax. "The person you really want to get to is the cook," he says. "The cook knows everything that goes on aboard a ship."

Releasing tensions

There are often tensions between the officers and regular seafarers, and the mission is usually occupied exclusively by one or the other. On some ships these divisions are more volatile because the hierarchy divides along ethnic lines as well. Disdain for regular seafarers, coupled with racist contempt, can make life for a sailor unbearable. Evans says that while an increasing number of ships have many nationalities represented among the officers, it is still common to see officers of one nationality, and crew of another.

Evans' approach to advocacy is to reach the captain of the ship or the shipping agent (a company representative in port) and say: "How can we resolve this?"

Complaints are often about working conditions or late pay, and a problem comes to light almost every two weeks. "That's an improvement," he laughs. "Not that long ago, there was at least one crisis per week."

Life aboard a container ship is hard work, and the sailors are away from their families for long periods. The mission offers rest, recreation and fellowship. It also provides a strong voice for fair treatment and a hope for peaceful, diplomatic resolution of conflict — a strong witness in the commercial shipping industry.

More food aid to N. Korea needed to avert disaster

WINNIPEG (CFGB) — Mounting evidence of severe malnutrition and a major preharvest food shortage in North Korea has prompted member agencies of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank to commit an additional half-million dollars to finance a regional purchase of food for immediate delivery.

The country has already been reeling from food shortages and the decision to provide more aid came less than a week after a foodgrains bank delegation returned from North Korea.

"Conditions have seriously deteriorated since our last visit in November. I have not seen this level of malnutrition since Ethiopia in 1985," reported Al Kehler, Canadian Foodgrains Bank program co-ordinator.

The World Food Program in Pyongyang describes conditions in North Korea as "a famine in the making." According to that organization, more than 800,000 metric tonnes of food are required prior to harvest in September/October. But food aid commitments to date will cover no more than a third of this amount.

Children affected

"People are already dying" says Al Kehler, and it is estimated that 80,000 children (3.7 per cent of the population) are severely malnourished. "A doctor in Kangwon province said the mortality rate in his county was 1 1/2 times higher than normal because of inadequate food. An official in Wonsan City stated that one to two children were dying every month in each of the county's 33 nurseries."

As with previous food commitments to North Korea, Canadian Foodgrains Bank has asked the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for permission to use its existing CIDA funding in North Korea.

If CIDA agrees to support the proposed regional purchase (likely to involve the purchase of food in neighboring China or Vietnam) the foodgrains bank response could be as much as $2.5 million (Cdn).

"Without additional substantial food aid shipments, people will simply starve in large numbers," says Rick Fee, director of Presbyterian World Service and Development. "We must act now to avert further disaster and suffering."

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Editorial

Cultivating worship which goes against the grain

At the turn of the millenium, the internal issue which may most effect members of the Christian Reformed Church in North America relates to how we worship. In fact, in many places the "worship wars" have already begun. What is it about worship that makes a lot of us so touchy when something occurs which we don't like, can't relate to, believe is inappropriate, or feel is dated or irrelevant?

The answer lies partly in our nature as religious beings. Public worship, though corporate, requires a personal response to God and involves our very being in fellowship with him. When we feel something in worship isn't touching that relationship, or causes an affront to it, our hackles rise. Generational and cultural differences may also create gaps of understanding that feel insurmountable. Then too, because our Reformed tradition has stressed the importance of our participation in public worship we all feel we "own" it: we should have something to say about what happens and how it happens. But we may not trust our worship committee, council, pastor or whomever to make those decisions on our behalf.

Synod recently enthusiastically endorsed a report on worship and wanted to ensure that congregational leaders, as well as Joe and Josie in the pew, have access to the report's good stuff (see CC, June 27). It will be made available via CRC Publications, formatted for easy study by members, groups and committees of all kinds.

If you have never read or even seen a synodical study report, and never hoped to, please reconsider. It deserves careful attention, whether you worship in the CRC or not, and no matter what worship style appeals to you. It does something very important: it gets beyond the "worship wars"; in a pastoral manner it helps us think carefully about the influences in our confused and confusing postmodern society which are affecting how we worship.

When new spirits foment and much-needed shifts occur, the pendulum of change may swing too far or too uncritically in a particular direction. From our perspective, that is happening in the CRC, and some course corrections are necessary.

An awesome God at the centre

Worship, the report says, "is an ascription of worth, adoration, and praise to God"; it is "a God-initiated engagement of God and the worshipper, as well as a corporate/communal engagement among the worshippers, both locally and universally"; it "strengthens and is strengthened by shared memory, shared meaning and shared traditions of a particular community...."

With those statements in mind, it might be helpful to look at several tendencies in CRC worship and attitudes that we bring to worship which warrant re-evaluation:

Shifting the focus from God to ourselves.

Some congregations seem to be gradually slipping into a worship style that focusses more on *us* and our "felt needs" than on God and ascribing him worth.

A lot of us are hurting, and we go to church absorbed in those hurts, expecting a service to meet our specific needs. That's understandable, but our own hurts can't be the starting point in public worship (though they may be in other church meetings). In fact, only when God is truly at the centre of our worship can our own pain be put in perspective — and be healed.

We're losing our awe of God.

Many of us would prefer to focus on Jesus as Friend, forgetting that he is also our King (and Judge). Perhaps that's because we grew up with a vision of God that made him seem stern and remote. But in doing that, are we moving toward the unbiblical but popular notion that the "Old Testament God" (the Father) and the "New Testament God" (Jesus and the Spirit) are fundamentally different? that somehow God underwent a profound personality change during the inter-testamental period? In worship this may show itself in such things as avoidance of Psalm singing; preaching mostly from the New Testament; becoming careless about the posture and atmosphere of our worship.

Our theology, properly presented, beautifully integrates the whole of Scripture and allows us to commune with a God who is at once intimate and awe-inspiring. In a staunchly egalitarian society, approaching God as humble, obedient subjects goes against the grain. But in worship we meet the Ruler of the Cosmos who deserves our reverence, obedience, praise, and the absolute best we have to offer. The great mystery is that while remaining our great Sovereign Lord, such a God is *also* our Savior and Friend.

We're in this together

We're losing our communality.

There's a difference between seeing a congregation as a collection of individuals and seeing it as a corporate body — the *body* of Christ. In the former, the individual comes first. In the latter, together we're mysteriously knit into Christ himself as a *people*.

That doesn't mean that the church can ever ignore ministering to individuals. But corporate worship, by definition, focusses on *we*, not *I*. So our prayers, songs and entire liturgy must reflect that. Does your congregation sing songs which more often relate your (or someone's) personal spiritual experience than they "ascribe to the Lord the praise due to his name"? Does whoever leads your congregational prayers say "I" more often than "we"?

The council's/consistory's role is crucial. If there are several worship "factions" in your local church, the council must remind the congregation that it is one body. The council must be both wise enough to know what's non-negotiable and pastoral enough to help worship leaders achieve a balance of tastes in the things that are negotiable.

We're losing our "shared memory, shared meaning and shared tradition."

Those shared elements go beyond the "communality" of the local congregation to the entire denomination — and then to all of Christendom. Reciting the *Apostles' Creed*, using and knowing the liturgical forms for baptism or the Lord's Supper, singing songs from the *Psalter Hymnal*, learning many of those hymns and Psalms, Scripture passages, and parts of the catechism from memory, and teaching them to our children are important to our faith, not the least because they reinforce that shared memory, meaning and tradition. They bind us together no matter what CRC on the continent we may be worshipping in; but they also point to the church universal.

That's important because we're a *people* of God, part of Christ's Body set in a particular Christian tradition which has shaped us in a (mostly) biblical way. We stand in the line not only of John Calvin and the other Reformers, but in the line of the prophets and apostles, the early Christians, and all the people of God in Christ through the centuries till now, living and dead. So we can't just "do our own thing" as if the moment is all that matters, as if that history doesn't exist, and as if we're "non-denominational."

Valuing the book

We're losing our literacy.

We're in the technological age; visual images are where it's at. But we need to go against the cultural grain (again) in maintaining our love for learning,

Continued on page 5...

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- ***provide contact for the Christian community.***

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Letters

New Canadian structure for CRC won't matter much

Thanks for the fine edition of CC on the Christian Reformed Church synod. I was rather surprised that the restructuring plan for Canadian ministries passed as quickly as it did. It had come to my attention quite some time ago while I served on the denominational board of trustees and, I must say, I felt then already that it was not only rather cumbersome but philosophically flawed as well.

As I understand it, there were several driving factors behind this plan. First of all, Revenue Canada had long ago been urging more Canadian governance. Along with this there seem to be a goodly number of people up there in the North who have "Rodney Dangerfield syndrome." They feel that they "just can't get no respect" — the respect they deserve from those who live south of the border.

'Can't get no respect'

I was driving from Owen Sound to Grand Rapids immediately after the major league baseball All-Star game at the beginning of July. Some London station went on for hours about how the Canadian national anthem had not been carried on CNN. Seems like the church isn't the only place were Canadians feel a lack of respect.

Two other reasons come to my mind which are more directly related to our denomination. First, the Canadian churches were rebuffed several times at the suggestion that they would dare to form their own regional synod.

Second, the Canadian churches themselves realized full well that the time had come to get the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC) into a more ecclesiastical orbit.

The net result was a grandiose Canadian restructuring plan. But to what end? In a day and age when our denomination continues to lose members and we ought to think about downsizing, we, in fact, add another layer of bureaucracy.

We sell this idea by supposing that by creating three separate offices we will bring the church closer to the people. Seems a little absurd when you are talking a country the size of Canada, for one thing. For another, what with fax and e-mail and the like, I think you and I are as face-to-face as virtually any one in Canada will be, except maybe the people who live within 25 miles of the proposed offices.

For three years we tried a sort of branch office of CRC Publications out here [in southern California]. Clearly, we were not able to stock everything, nor did we have the personnel to answer every question, as the people at CRC Pubs in the denominational headquarters could. In the long run, those who lived close, within 10 miles, came to check out the new material and to preview stuff. The others simply used the catalogue and the 800-number and had stuff drop-shipped from Michigan.

Ambivalent response

I really don't think that this move will fix the nationalism issue anymore than will the playing of "O Canada" at the next All Star game.

Whether it will improve the shortcomings of the CCRCC will, I believe, have more to do with the people who are involved than the structure used. Too often the issue is one of who's in control, and one wonders if we as Christians should not be more willing to give up control rather than be so eager to hold on to it.

As for the churches? I have asked people both from Ontario and from B.C. what they think of it all and was surprised with their reactions. They just shrugged and said, "Will it really matter?"

Will it matter? My prayer is that God will somehow use it to further his work in the little corner of his Kingdom that we call the Christian Reformed Church, both in Canada and in the U.S.

Please accept these observation from this southern voice from the north (or would you say, a northern voice from the south?).

(Rev.) John Van Schepen
Bellflower, Calif.

The church needs the talents, ideas of all ages

I am saddened when I hear that people assume that the elderly are without merit and that they are constantly disapproving [what goes on in the church]. We all experience things differently and, therefore, we do not all think alike just because we belong to a certain age group.

Whether we are on fire for the Lord or smoldering embers, whether we are rocks or eagles, we all have a place in the family of God. Some people exercise more caution than others when it comes to new ideas. We need these people as much as we need those who have the gift of stirring our hearts through the arts of music and movement. But all the members of our congregations are deserving of our sensitivity and respect.

We need our whole family to collectively use their spiritual gifts and talents in service to God. We need the zealous, the vulnerable, the imperturbable and the resonant. All together, we become one in heart and mind in praise and in worship. That must be pleasing to God's ear.

Jacqui Cornelisse
Orillia, Ont.

... continued from page 4

books and The Book. That doesn't mean shunning visual images or aids in church. (John Calvin undoubtedly over-reacted to Catholic excesses, relegating his followers for centuries to visually and symbolically deficient worship.) But we Christians have always been "people of the book," lower- and upper-case "b" — our guide to Life is a book, and the faith and its working out in theology are ideas which require communicating in words, first of all (we might also ponder again about the meaning of Christ as "The Word").

Foreign book

This has important implications for our congregational Bible study, church education and worship. A CRC in this area has no pews, and therefore no permanent Bibles and hymnals. Song texts and litanies are projected onto the front wall. That's not objectionable, per se, but we've noticed that it is causing people to bypass taking hymnals with them to their seats.

If that continues it will mean that young people and newcomers will not become familiar with their denomination's hymnal, which is also a "service book," the Reformed version of a prayerbook or missal. Not only will they not know its Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, they won't become familiar with the liturgical forms, creeds and confessions either.

At an evening service a guest preacher wanted us to refer to a catechism Lord's Day and to read the answer outloud with her. Many in the congregation couldn't make that verbal confession with the rest of us because they hadn't picked up a hymnal.

As a child I and other kids learned countless things about Scripture, our church and its confessions by paging through the Psalter Hymnal and the Bible during very long sermons. While I'm not suggesting kids should tune-out the preacher (and sermons are much shorter now!) such tactile activity was invaluable in acquainting many of us kids with our faith and our church.

For me, what all this comes down to is that being a Christian takes work, sometimes hard work. Worship, which is properly neither entertainment nor therapy, has the right to demand something of you and me: to stretch our faith; to confront our sin; to help us meet our holy but loving God. And then the comfort — and joy — will come.

Marian Van Til

Associate editor Marian Van Til, who has a master's degree in music history, has had a life-long interest in liturgy and church music, and since age 13 has been a church organist, pianist, choral conductor or vocal soloist. She is a member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines and is the music director at St. John's Episcopal (Anglican) Church in Youngstown, N.Y.

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In their own words: Letters from Chinese Christians

The following letter excerpts were provided by Compass Direct, a Christian news service which focuses on areas of the world where Christians are persecuted.

Anhui

"In March 1995 an evangelist came from another province and preached in a friend's house where I first came to know the one true God. But two days later this brother ... was taken away by police. I was confused and asked the Three Self pastor. He said, 'He is a member of the Disciples (*Mentuhui*) [a banned Christian group]. Miracles are heretical and healing the sick is of the devil.'

"In early 1996 I passed on some booklets to friends to read. But they passed them on to the Three Self pastor who gave them to the police. The police and the Religious Affairs Bureau were alerted. You see how frightening it was! They came to my house saying they were searching for booklets from overseas. Thank God! Thank God! He gave me great courage and victory over them. Those people from the Three Self had nothing to say. After this, I was not troubled by them again. But others were frightened."

Letter from Tongling, March 5, 1997.

Hebei

"Although we are a small place, God's church has been established here. At first, everything was peaceful and many people met together. But just before Christmas [1996] the higher authorities put out a great deal of propaganda against believing in Christianity. They also claimed that there were false believers who used the name of Jesus to do evil things, so the state had to take action.

"Documents were sent down to every work unit accordingly, ordering them to take action and control the church, etc. So we have changed the shape of our meetings and where several dozen used to meet, now we have changed to just a handful. But did not the Lord say where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst?"

Letter of February 26, 1996.

"The church here is now being persecuted. The Three Self is having evangelists arrested and imprisoned. My mother was also arrested."

Letter of March 5, 1997

Heilongjiang

"The church in Anda is suffering persecution. House churches are forbidden, but we continue to meet. We have no Christian books apart from the Bible."

Letter of March 25, 1997.

"The church now meets in my home. We used to number 60 but are now down to 20 because of persecution. Many are weak and some have lost faith altogether. In Inner Mongolia there is great persecution. Christians [are] arrested and imprisoned. Please pray we will be strong and go out and preach the gospel."

Letter from Nehe City, March 27, 1997.

VOICE OF THE MARTYRS

Jiangxi

"When the brothers and sisters were celebrating Christmas [1996] they suffered persecution. All at that home meeting were fined. They were detained for five days and nights in the local police station. Praise God, his grace is good — this was used by Christ to test our faith.

"It was engraved in our hearts that God does not want beautiful church buildings or highly educated people, but those who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

"Serving the Lord is not like living in a hothouse, nor enjoying green pastures, but through imprisonment and tasting the bitter waters of Marah, only then will we arrive at Elim (Exodus 15:23-27)."

From Yujiang County, March 4, 1997.

"Since 1983 the house church set up in Zhouqiao Township in Yujiang County in Jiangxi has suffered persecution from the local government. They set about registration and all those who refused were labeled as 'illegal religious meetings.' Six believers were arrested....

"They made Christians the target of the 'Strike Hard' anti-crime campaign. The county government held three-day political studies classes for Christians. If you failed to attend you were fined. So many believers do not dare to meet now, and nobody dares take responsibility to lead the house meeting. Some have given up their faith.

"In neighboring Gaogongzhai they have prohibited meetings, and fined Christians. They stole more than 400 kilos of rice. They tied people up and forced them to roast under the hot sun last July. But by God's grace the brethren endured it. All of what I write is true."

Letter from a responsible brother of the Zhouqiao church in Yujiang, Jiangxi Province, Jan. 17, 1997.

Zhejiang

"The angry waves attacking the Chinese church are higher and higher. Since March we have been engulfed. The authorities have acted from certain key centres in a concerted way, and the church has entered a period of intense suffering. Many leaders have been arrested....

"This persecution is worse than during the Cultural Revolution. At least they searched homes while the head of the household was present. But now they smash down the door even when he is away, and ransack homes. They come in police cars, sirens blaring, surround Christians' homes as if they were robbers, and arrest them as 'counter-revolutionaries.'

"In Huzhou City and elsewhere the local government forced the house church leaders to attend a meeting and angrily ordered all the house churches to join the Three Self. At the end of April news came that the government would make more arrests between May 1-15 and close down all the house churches across the country. Please pray urgently. I also am on the arrest list and have had to leave home."

Letter of April 29, 1997.

Marian den Boer

When Mom did the learn routine

Karen Angela den Boer

It was a perfect June Saturday, sunny and clear, with no humidity. As was her custom in June, Mom was readying the pool for summer use: balancing the pH and vacuuming. She brought the foam noodles and rubber balls from the garage. "Hey, Angela," she called. "Do you have a flashlight I can borrow?"

"Yeah. Except I don't know where it is." I remember being unable to find it. And right now I was planting Amanda's castor bean plant — two feet high with a straight, purplish stem and maple-shaped leaves. The earth I was digging in was full of clay. I wondered if it was suitable for making pots. Not only did every shovelful stick to the spade, but each also contained another fat, wriggling worm. The thought of sliding such a beneficial but disgusting creature in two with my spade made me very careful.

"What do you need a flashlight for?" I asked.

"I have to get the inner tubes from out of the garage attic."

"Michelle," I asked, "could you look for a flashlight?" The hole I was digging was nearly deep enough now. I sprinkled fine, white bone meal over the hole and then mixed it in, coughing as I inhaled some of the smelly stuff. This gardening was kind of disgusting, I thought, when I heard an earthshaking crash. *Mom!* I sprinted to the garage. I knew Mom was in there. Maybe she had fallen from the ladder....

Disappearing act

Through settling dust I saw drywall debris scattered across the cement floor. "Mom! Mom!" I shouted frantically as I searched for her, visualizing bruises and broken bones from the 10-foot fall.

Mom's voice came from above me, through a gaping hole in the ceiling. "I'm up here!" I sagged in relief. Mom stood balanced on the 2 x 4 beams of the ceiling above my head. She had stepped on the drywall and fallen through, luckily holding onto crossbeams with her arms. "It was dark," she defended herself.

It was no longer dark. Three, two-foot squares of drywall had tumbled to the floor and several more looked ready to fall. The attic was lit as brightly as the rest of the garage. Since Mom was very shaken, Michelle and I moved the ladder over to the new entrance so she could come down. She had white drywall dust on her blue shorts and scrapes on her legs.

Crisis focuses perspective

I resumed my gardening. Mom brought the inner tubes to the pool, and as she walked by, she said, "Thanks for worrying about me."

I sure had been worried, I realized. And it was partly my fault for not loaning my flashlight. I stood up, brushing my hands off on my shorts. "Let me guess what Dad said," I mimicked him: "How could you do that? Don't you know you're not supposed to step on the drywall?"

"That's exactly what he did say." We laughed. And I realized how precious parents — and all those close to us — are, and how easy it is to forget that until a crisis occurs. If Dad had been the first one to enter the garage just as the dust was settling, I am sure he would have seen what I mean.

Karen Angela Den Boer, Marian's 18-year-old daughter has written this months column while her mother prepares for a family holiday. Karen will enter Dordt College, Sioux Center, Iowa, in September as a journalism major.

Canadian reference work rescued by modern technology

(Canadian Scene) — Until Mel Hurtig, an Edmonton publisher and ardent Canadian nationalist, introduced *The Canadian Encyclopedia* in 1985, Canadian encyclopedias had been mediocre and superficial. With the aid of a $3 million grant from the Alberta government, Hurtig first published this encyclopedia in three volumes to great acclaim by universities, schools and the general public. Three years later, a four-volume, updated edition was produced, but then Hurtig Publishers ran into financial difficulties and no more editions could be planned.

In 1991, McClelland and Stewart, a venerable Canadian publishing house, which for 91 years has enjoyed an outstanding record for publishing and promoting works by Canadians, bought Hurtig Publishers and the rights to *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. No more editions of the encyclopedia were printed, but taking advantage of modern computer technology and the ability of the CD-ROM to store vast amounts of information on a single compact disk, McClelland and Stewart updated and transferred the entire encyclopedia to CD-ROM. The first edition was published in 1995, and updated editions are produced annually.

But because the capacity of the disc for storing information is far greater than is required for the encyclopedia, *The Canadian Encyclopedia* disc also contains the concise *Columbia Encyclopedia* with world information, and the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*. The dictionary has French-English translations. There is also a thesaurus, a Canadian quiz and some 3,000 pictures and video clips.

Appeal to youth

The video clips are of great appeal to young minds. You can read about Glenn Gould — then call up a clip that lets you see and hear him at the piano. You can read about Pierre Elliott Trudeau and see and hear him speaking. And see and hear the landing of Canadian troops on European soil on D-Day. The CD-ROM version of the encyclopedia also includes a few "virtual reality" clips in which the picture moves in and around such places as Toronto's Sky-Dome, Vancouver's Museum of Anthropology and Hull's Museum of Civilization.

Actor's play tells of his escape from certain death

Karen Bell

TORONTO (Canadian Scene) — *Come Good Rain*, written and performed by George Seremba, is more than a play; it is a man reliving his own harrowing escape from execution. The 39-year-old Seremba was born in Kampala, Uganda, into a large and very happy family. His placid life and the lives of fellow Ugandans were thrown into turmoil in 1966 by the repressive dictatorships of Milton Obote and the equally murderous Idi Amin.

Left for dead

Arrested for his resistance activities in 1980 and immediately sentenced to death, Seremba was tortured and taken into a forest. There, soldiers sprayed him with bullets from their AK47s and left him for dead. But Seremba was still alive and his escape from death is a miracle that he has been celebrating in his play, *Come Good Rain*, for the last five years.

Seremba arrived in Canada in 1985 and now pursues a career as an actor and playwright. His one-man play, *Come Good Rain*, premiered at Toronto's Factory Theatre and since then he has performed it more than 180 times at various locations in Canada, and in the United States, England, Ireland and Israel. In 1994, *Come Good Rain* won a Dora Award for best Canadian play and was later nominated by the NAACP, the African-American association, for five Image awards.

Recently George Seremba, a powerfully built man with a deep voice and infectious laugh, performed his play again at the Factory Theatre. Sold-out audiences during a March-April run occasioned a return of the play in May. *Come Good Rain*, which Seremba hopes to take one day to New York and Washington, is beautifully written and his vivid performance invokes the joy of his childhood, the terror of a man facing certain death and the pain of a patriot in exile who mourns the wanton destruction of his beloved country. George Seremba dedicates each performance to his 500,000 countrymen and -women who did not escape the mass executions in Uganda.

Book Review

Remarkable Chinese Christian was first woman Anglican cleric

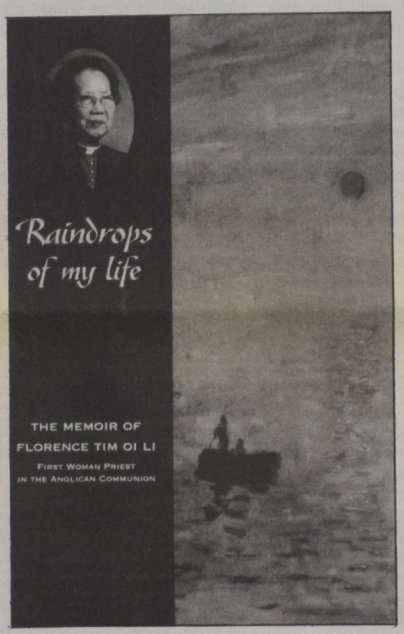
Raindrops of My Life:

The Memoir of Florence Tim Oi Li.

Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1996.

Nelly Westerhoff

This slim volume is the memoir of a remarkable courageous woman in which are recounted her experiences as the first woman priest in the Anglican Communion and a persevering Christian during the last six immensely turbulent decades in the history of the People's Republic of China.



Born in 1907 in Hong Kong, Rev. Li acquired a working knowledge of English from her well-educated father. He had a conversion experience during Florence's childhood and therefore, over a period of years, various teachers and preachers visited the family home, widening and increasing her knowledge of the Christian faith.

No place for women

In her early teens Florence began teaching neighborhood girls, and taught in various capacities while she continued to further her own education. But the Sino-Japanese war erupted and shattered the tranquillity of her life. She became engulfed in all the subsequent political and cultural experimentation, as did all intellectuals of her time.

In January 1944, in order to increase her effectiveness as a church leader, she was ordained an Anglican priest on the island of Macau by the local bishop, whereupon she officially became rector of a congregation of refugees which included schoolmasters, university lecturers, students, business people and government officials. Voluntarily resigning her title of priest in order to placate an irate Bishop of Canterbury and protect the bishop who ordained her, she nevertheless continued to serve the church as rector.

Rev. Li went on to return to mainland China where she established schools and a hospital for girls and young women who were so often despised in Chinese culture. They were shut down during the Land Reform movement and subsequent turmoil, causing her much grief. Rigorously she forced herself not to rebel as the church of the Three-Self Movement which she, in consultation with Chou en-Lai, had helped start, resulted in the disbanding of independent churches and Christian seminaries.

Curious lack of passion

As a religious leader and intellectual she must have suffered intensely, yet throughout the book she remains non-judgmental, voicing no criticism of her oppressors as well as her cherished Christian beliefs were subjected to revision or repression. Red Guards looted her home, burned her books, conscripted her into work crews (as a 6-year-old she was required to haul trees down a mountain-side), and subjected her to intense indoctrination efforts: Li stayed true to her faith. She died in Toronto in 1992, two years short of the 50th anniversary of her ordination.

Regrettably, there is a curious lack of intellectual passion in this story, particularly in her apparent lack of resentment of the social ideologies who tried to "re-educate" her. She consistently seems to have adapted and bent to whichever political ideology dominated, seeking out the best in people. But to the end she remained an indomitable Christian, devoted to advancing the participation of women in the governance of the church she loved.

Secondly, the book would have benefited from some rigorous editing to eliminate the sometimes awkward grammar and to enliven the stilted formality with which Tim Oi Li's exciting life was chronicled.

Nelly Westerhoff has a BA in English literature from Brock University, St. Catharines, Ont., and is co-owner with her husband and son of Cedarway Floral Inc., where they grow roses and gerberas.

Send your questions to **Peter and Marja.** Confidentiality is assured.

Two Filipino Christians beheaded by Saudi Arabia

ISTANBUL, Turkey (Compass) — Two Filipino Christians involved in Bible studies and Christian prayers in the Saudi prison where they were jailed were beheaded by the sword on May 4 in Riyadh.

According to a May 5 article in the Saudi newspaper *Al-Jazeerah*, Ruel Janda and Arnel Betran were convicted and executed for "forced armed robbery" by order 4/462 of the Supreme Judicial Council of Saudi Arabia. During the alleged incident in a Riyadh shop, the paper said, the two were accused of striking an employee on the head with an iron bar.

Saudi Arabia strictly enforces Islamic law by publicly executing convicted murderers, drug smugglers, rapists and armed robbers.

Fabricated charges

However, a former cellmate of the executed men has declared that the two Catholic Christians were jailed more than two years ago on fabricated charges. According to recently released prisoner Donato Lama, the men were most likely executed because of the particularly active Christian witness of Janda among fellow Filipino cellmates.

"There had been an argument at the store where they worked," Lama said, "and a fight broke out between them and some Pakistani and Egyptian nationals. Afterwards, they took revenge against Ruel and Arnel by accusing them of stealing from the store." The two executed men had been in prison since April 7, 1995.

Lama said he had met Janda and Betran during his own lengthy imprisonment in the same prison, where he was being held on charges of "promoting Christianity" in Saudi Arabia. A computer programmer for Saudia airlines, Lama was arrested when police discovered a snapshot of him praying with other expatriate Christians in Riyadh on Christmas Day, 1984.

During their incarceration together, Lama said, he had grown "very close in faith" to Janda and several other Christian Filipinos.

Lama said that he and Janda were both locked into an isolation cell with a Saudi madman in September and October of 1996, after Muslim Filipino cellmates reported them to the guards for conducting Bible studies and praying with other prisoners in the cell. After the eight-week ordeal, he said, they were warned that another complaint against them would result in "a severe and ultimate punishment."

After 17 months in prison and 70 lashes, Lama was released and flew back to the Philippines on March 28 of this year.

After the executions of Janda and Betran were reported, Filipino Christian inmate Rene H. Camahort sent a letter out of Al-Malaz Prison, confirming the probable motivation for executing Janda.

Yeltsin vetoes new religion bill

LONDON (Compass) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin refused to sign the controversial Law of Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations and on July 23 sent it back to parliament for further work. His office declared that some parts of the bill contradict the Russian Constitution and violate international agreements on religious freedom.

The bill was passed, 300 votes to eight votes, by the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian parliament, on June 23. It was approved by the upper house, the Federation Council, 112 votes to four votes on July 4, with one abstention.

The bill had been vigorously supported by Russian Orthodox Church leaders but opposed by human rights and religious liberty activists within Russia. Former parliamentary deputy Father Gleb Yakunin complained it was "blatantly discriminatory" and "oriented toward reinstating Soviet religious policy." It also encountered opposition from outside Russia. Pope John Paul II wrote a "personal letter" to President Yeltsin on June 24 (made public by the Vatican on July 17) complaining that the bill was "very restrictive" compared with the 1990 law on freedom of conscience which it would have replaced.

The United States Senate voted on July 16 to reduce U.S. aid to Russia by $200 million in 1998 if the bill became law. Strong messages of concern were also sent by a number of the European Union.

Christian aid is flowing into Congo

NEW YORK, N.Y. (EP) — Church World Service (CWS) is joining with ecumenical partners to help meet needs for basic medicine, food, seeds and tools in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). CWS says these materials will help that nation recover following 32 years of abuse and neglect by the Mobutu regime, ousted in May.

"This is an emergency that has been happening for years," said Rick Augsburger, Emergency Response Director for CWS, the humanitarian assistance ministry of the National Council of Churches. This "chronic emergency" has been exacerbated during the past few years by ethnic strife, civil war and the influx of refugees, he said.

Augsburger was part of an international, inter-agency assessment team, sent by ACT (Action by Churches Together), that spent nine days in June assessing emergency needs. He described widespread malnutrition, a lack of basic medicines and medical supplies and a devastated infrastructure, along with the special needs of internally displaced Congolese.

"The most critical needs we saw were in Eastern Zaire," he said. For example, he visited a large hospital down river from Kisangani that serves villages up and down the Congo River. "It was totally looted of medicines and equipment during the war by retreating forces of the former Army of Zaire. And they are still trying to serve patients."

The emergency assistance will help lay the ground work for longer-term development in the DRC, Augsburger said. "Now if the country can gain some sense of stability, the DRC can fix itself," he said, "but it needs the help of outside inputs to help make up for the difficulties of the past."

Scriptures further infiltrate Africa

MBABANE, Swaziland (EP) — According to legend, the founder of the African nation of Swaziland had a vision in which he saw people of a different color coming to him bearing a book and a circular object. They urged King Somhlolo to spurn the circular object (money) and to take the book (the Bible). So in 1844 the King sent four messengers to find the men with the book. Their visit to the Methodist Mission at Thaba Nchu in the Free State resulted in two missionaries going to Swaziland. Early this year that vision was fulfilled when the complete Bible in Swati was jointly published by the Bible Society of South Africa and the Bible Society of Swaziland. For the first time ever, almost two million Swati speakers living in Swaziland and South Africa are able to read and hear the Bible in their own language.

Three other African nations celebrated the arrival of new Scriptures earlier this year: the Kabiye New Testament was launched in Kara, Togo; the Igikuria New Testament was published for Abakuria communities living on Kenya's border with Tanzania; and the Bible Society in Mozambique published a new interconfessional New Testament in the Gitonga language.

Blended worship the answer

HOUSTON, Texas (EP) — Churches caught between the conflicting needs of "boomers" and "busters" are finding a solution in blended worship, according to the Rev. Robert Webber, a leading authority on worship renewal.

Speaking to the biennial convocation of the Fellowship of United Methodists in Music and Worship Arts in mid-July, Webber said the concept of blended worship provides hope for bringing together contemporary and traditional worship styles.

He described the tension in recent years between those who resist singing praise choruses and a new generation of "seekers" who think "mainliners are not even Christian."

Now, he observed, there is growing awareness that both are needed and that "blended" worship is not only possible but desirable. Webber is the author of more than a dozen books about worship, including *Worship Old and New* (Zondervan).

Lutheran group celebrates 50th

HONG KONG, China (EP) — The Lutheran World Federation celebrated its 50th anniversary with special meetings in Hong Kong, July 8-19. About 5,000 people attended the celebration. Bishop Horst Hirschler of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hanover told the crowd, "We do not point to ourselves, and we do not point to Luther. No, with Luther we point to Christ. And in doing so we are serving the unity of Christianity worldwide." Bishop Christian Krause of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brunswick, Germany, was elected president of the federation. Krause, 57, will replace Brazilian theologian Gottfried Brakemeier.

No earthly employer

LONDON, England (EP) — Britain's priests work for God, not any human being, and therefore have no rights under Britain's employment laws, a court has ruled. A panel of appeals court judges turned down a lawsuit brought by Anglican curate Alex Coker, who charges that he was unfairly dismissed. "A minister of religion serves God and his congregation but does not serve an employer. There is not a contract that he will serve a terrestrial employer in the performance of his duties," said judge Lord Justice Christopher Staughton.

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
* Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
Al Wolters

We must keep that first love

The death clock of a marriage begins to toll when partners take each other for granted. Not all of these marriages fall apart. Not all dead trees rot and collapse. Some petrify and seem to endure forever. Dead marriages — and petrified churches — can last a long time.

You take your spouse for granted when you no longer recognize her or his value. She blends in with the furniture and he belongs to the routine: there are no sparkles, no surprises and no thanksgivings.

Jesus told the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) that it had many qualities which he liked: hard work, stick-with-it-ness, knowledge of sound doctrine, discernment of heretics, and the courage to stand up for its convictions and pay the price. But, said the Lord, "You have forsaken your first love."

So we learn that it is possible for a church to do the God-demanded, right thing in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments and the exercise of discipline (that triple test of the true church — Article 28, *Belgic Confession*), and yet be as dead as a petrified tree because she has forsaken her first love.

Marvelling at His care

In terms of the church and her Lord, first love means that we know the value of our redemption. It means that we marvel at the fact that he loves us, cares for us, died for us. At first, love is accompanied with a whole set of beautiful and crazy acts. That's why, when Christ accuses the congregation of forsaking its first love he commands them to "repent and do the things you did at first." "First love" and "first works" go together. Only when you are amazed by grace do you do amazing things for him who loved you. You cross mountains and do little jobs of service, because his love lit a flame in your heart.

On a number of occasions I have seen people leave the denomination I love (which also pays my retirement money). The people of whom I'm thinking were lukewarm members. But when they joined this evangelical church, they became enthusiastic Christians. And I'm thankful they did. They came into a group that was utterly happy because they were saved by Jesus from sin and death and hell. There was a honeymoon atmosphere of conversion and rebirth and a longing for the deeper experience of the abundant life with Christ.

Familiarity breeds contempt

Why didn't they find that in the church they left? I think it was because they knew everybody and everybody's history in their former church. And they could not see Christ.

Today, however, these people have a new appreciation for the church they left: they like the stick-with-it-ness of its members, their discernment and loyalty — and all the other things for which the Ephesian church was commended in Rev. 2:1-7. By this time they know that one cannot live on first love. But one cannot be church without it either. The best way to keep first love alive in any church is to have a few new converts every year. When the church sees God doing a new work with the old gospel, everybody falls in love again.

Andrew Kuyvenhoven always worries about and prays for the church — as do all retired ministers. He lives in Grand Rapids, Mich.

'Marriage savers' policies catch on across U.S.

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. (EP) — It's about to get a little harder to get married.

Across the U.S., communities are adopting "marriage policies," uniform standards and programs designed to strengthen marriage and combat divorce. A couple who wishes to get married in a participating church will have to meet the terms of the policy first.

Last spring leaders of about 30 Christian denominations, as well as the Jewish and Muslim communities in the St. Paul/Minneapolis area, came together to sign the Twin Cities Community Marriage Policy. Since then, dozens of communities across the U.S. have adopted similar policies.

Among other things, the policy requires engaged couples to go through at least four months of marriage preparation, including a premarital inventory designed to spot areas of future conflict. That emphasis on premarital counselling is designed to cut down on divorce by preventing bad marriages.

Participating religious organizations also agree to:

* Encourage additional retreats, classes and marriage enrichment opportunities designed to build and strengthen marriages.
* Train mature married couples to serve as mentors to those who are engaged, newlyweds or experiencing marital difficulties.
* Develop and use support systems for blended families.
* Co-operate with other congregations and organizations to share resources and create a climate in which all marriages are helped to succeed.

The policy was the brainchild of Michael McManus, a syndicated religion and ethics columnist who founded the Marriage Savers Institute with his wife, Harriet. "I'm convinced that if you sign this policy you'll see the beginning of a new day for marriage and divorce...," McManus told the religious leaders who gathered for the signing. "Given the breadth of your commitment, I predict you will see as much as a 50 per cent drop in divorce in five years."

Bonn Clayton, a layperson and former moderator of Colonial Church of Edina, Minn., chaired the committee that brought Marriage Savers to the Twin Cities. He explained, "Divorce is such a horrendous problem in our society. Divorce rates in the U.S. are double what they are in Europe. That's in the face of the fact that 43 per cent of the people in the U.S. go to church every Sunday and only 10 per cent go to church in Europe. Churches can do a lot to solve that problem, since 75 to 80 per cent of all marriages take place in churches. If we ask people to take a marriage preparation course and we do that in consensus, then some of the people who go through that course will not actually get married, and all of them will understand marriage a lot better and learn how to resolve conflicts."

Tom Prichard, executive director of the Minnesota Family Council, agreed. "Local churches need to sign on and be involved in the process. The real in-the-trenches work will be at the community and neighborhood level. Churches have to see the value of it and buy into it as a congregation. You need people who will catch a vision for this and push it in their communities." Now that the denominational leaders have signed the policy, individual churches have been asked to sign.

May be mandatory

A county-wide marriage policy went into effect in Lenawee County, Mich., on June 1. Church and government leaders in the southern Michigan county adopted the policy to combat a high local divorce rate of 68 per cent. The county's five judges, four majors, four magistrates, and about 60 to 150 clergy members agreed to perform weddings only for couples who have had premarital counselling.

In some parts of the U.S., getting premarital counselling isn't just a good idea — it may soon be the law. In Arizona, Florida, Michigan and Missouri, legislation is under consideration that would make it difficult or impossible to get a marriage license without having premarital counselling.

The bills are based on the idea that states have a financial interest in preventing divorce, since broken homes have quantifiable social costs.

"If we stop one divorce, it would seem to me that it would be worth trying," explained Missouri state Rep. Tom Hoppe. Under Hoppe's bill, religious organizations and county-approved groups would provide marriage counselling, although the requirement would be waived for couples who can't afford it. Another Missouri lawmaker proposed a 30-day waiting period for a wedding license for couples who don't want counselling.

In Michigan, a bill that passed the state house last year but died in the Senate would require couples to wait 60 days for a marriage license unless they've had premarital counselling.

In Arizona, a bill would charge a higher fee for marriage licenses if the couple hasn't had marriage counselling. A similar bill died in North Dakota last year after opponents called it a "wedding tax."

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Short Story

High Victory

by

Clarence Trowbridge

Doug's heart pounded as he followed the Mexican up the narrow stairs. One day in the electrical gang and already his worst fears were coming true. The stairway ended at the crane runway about a hundred feet up the side of the building.

A single rail ran along the runway on this side of the steel shop. Its mate ran along the other side 130 feet away. The giant 400-ton-capacity bridge crane spanned the distance between them.

Gomez started down the four-foot-wide runway toward the disabled crane. Doug followed him, tight against the wall, fighting the urge to fall on his belly and cling to the rail. Reaching the crane, Gomez climbed the short ladder on the end truck to the top of the crane. Doug followed him; a dead-grip on every run, never looking down.

Atop the crane Doug saw the trolley immobilized halfway across the span.

"Bet it's a bad 'hot-shoe,'" Gomez said, walking out on one of the main bridge girders towards the trolley. The girder was no more than 36 inches wide. Covered with a thick layer of slippery dust, it offered nothing to hang on to.

Doug glanced down between the girders and his stomach began to churn. As the retching began, he mentally threw in the towel. He was not going out on that beam. Next, he had to admit it to Gomez.

"Don't come out here," the Mexican shouted back. "Just watch how I do this."

The command was a reprieve. He watched in fearful fascination as Gomez changed the hot-shoe while standing on the edge of an abyss.

"Someday I'll be able to do that," Doug told him-heights, so can I. I just need time, that's all. One thing's for sure; with our fourth baby on the way, we can't live on labor-gang pay. One setback doesn't lose the battle. I'll make it next time."

But "next time" got put off. As the weeks went by Doug found all kinds of ways to avoid high jobs. He cheerfully volunteered for all the routine, dull (and ground level) jobs that the other men shunned. And when he had to go up with a crew, he busied himself running errands back to the floor for tools, parts and coffee.

Still,the fear was never far away. Every day he awoke to worry that this might be the day he would be put to the test.

"Why don't we pray about it?" his wife urged one evening when he had opened up to her more than he had intended.

"Honey, that's all I do anymore. But God doesn't seem to answer. Oh, I'm not blaming God. The problem is me."

"If it's that bad, maybe you should go back to your old job," she counselled him. "The children and I need you more than we need the money. A lot more!"

But Doug played it one shift at a time, always praying that when the test came he would rise to it.

* * * * * *

Then one day during a lunch-break trip back to the shop, he couldn't help but hear a conversation. His foreman was arguing with one of the first class electricians.

"Hey, I like the guy too," he heard the boss say, "But if he can't do the job I've got to let him go."

"Can't you give him a little more time?"

"I'm out of time. I have to have a man who can work all the jobs."

"When you gonna tell him?"

"I can let it ride to Friday."

Doug slipped away, badly shaken. The exchange could only have been about him. "I haven't fooled anyone," he thought. "Everybody must think I'm a complete coward."

He slammed his fist against a locker in frustration.

"How can I go back and face the guys? What am I going to tell Marge? God, I need your help. I need it *now!*"

There was still a few minutes of lunch break. He walked aimlessly in the outdoor area between the steel shop and the scrap yard.

A crew from the power company was stringing high voltage lines above the area. Doug looked up to a transmission tower. A man was working suspended in a sling from the highest cross-arm.

"How can he do that? What does that man have in him that I don't?" Doug wondered.

He lowered his eyes in despair and at the base of the tower he saw a power company electrician preparing to eat his lunch. The man paused for a second with bowed head over the open lunch box. It was something you didn't see very often in this work environment. He felt drawn to the man.

"Hi," Doug greeted, "I thought I was the only guy in this mill that said grace for his lunch."

"I know that feeling," the man replied cheerfully. "My name is Doug Adams. I'm an electrical apprentice here in the steel shop. Mind if I sit?"

"No, glad to have the company. I'm Bob Conn. Would you like a sandwich? It's chicken salad. I got two."

"Thanks," Doug replied, "But, I'm too shook to eat a thing."

"Sorry, wish I could do something to help." The stranger said it as if he meant it; as if he really cared.

"Don't you ever get scared working way up there?" Doug asked.

"Once in a while I get a thrill," Bob grinned. "Why?"

"Because I can't handle height and it's gonna cost me my job this Friday."

"Man, that's tough. And you're talking to someone who knows."

"You mean, you used to be afraid of height too?"

"No, but I know what that kind of fear feels like." Except, it was the 'juice' I was scared of."

"No kidding?" Doug marvelled.

"It was no kidding matter." Bob was serious. "See, I was always nervous about it. Then one day I saw a guy get across a 2000-volt line. It fried him. Right before my eyes. After that I couldn't even touch a dead wire without heavy rubber gloves."

"And you conquered that fear?" Doug was suddenly alert.

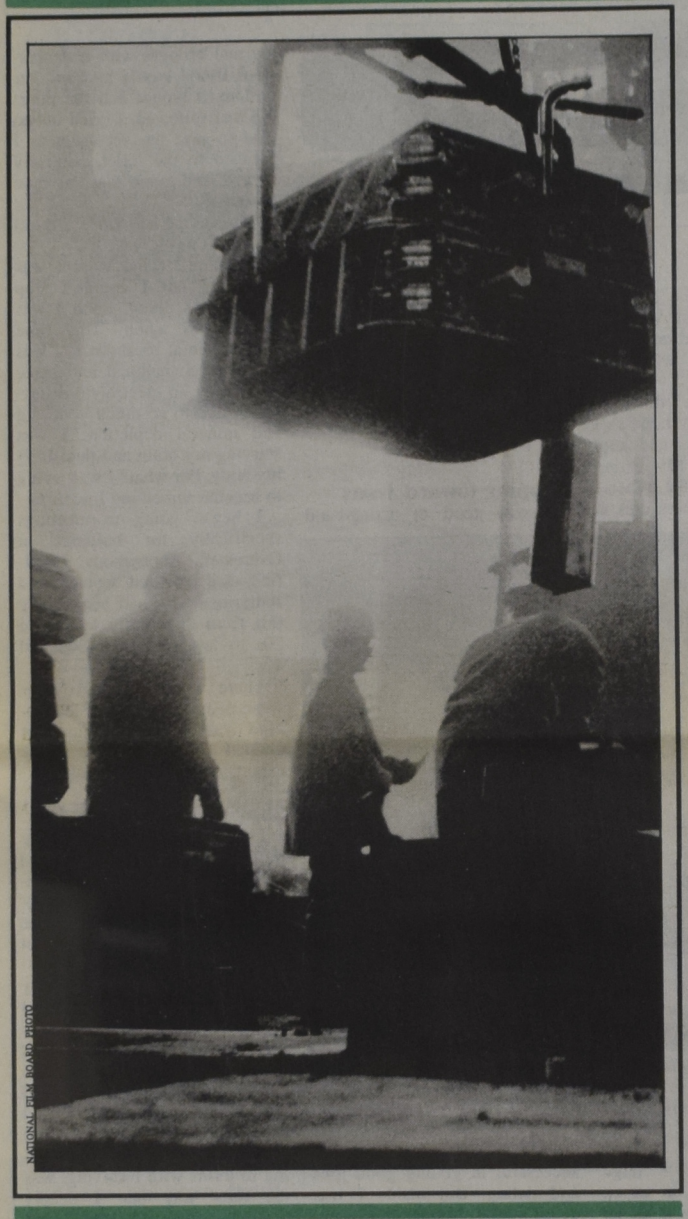
"Not right away I didn't. And it was affecting my work, big time. Then I took the matter to my minister." Bob paused and the memory made him smile. "I told him that God wasn't answering my prayers for help. Then he said to me, 'Just what kind of help were you expecting from God?'"

"I've asked myself the same question," Doug interrupted.

"So I said, 'I want God to take away my fear,'" Bob continued. "My pastor actually laughed. He said, 'This is right out of *The Wizard of Oz.* The cowardly Lion asking the Wizard for courage.'

"I didn't appreciate the comparison. I told him, 'I don't think that's funny. This is a serious matter.'

"'Sure, it's serious,' he said, 'but you're asking for the wrong thing. In Isaiah 26:2, it says: ***You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*** 'Like the Lion, you've been asking for courage. You should be asking for trust. The real issue is whether you believe God cares for you or whether he'll let you down when you need him most.' I tell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you Doug, it hit me like a ton of bricks."

"And did the fear go away then?"

"Not a bit. But it sure changed how I looked at my problem and how I prayed about it. I started asking God to help me trust him. A few days later I got my chance. A high tension line had to be spliced. The line was killed and locked out. I was still scared."

Bob paused and laughed at the memory.

"Talk about mixed emotions; half of me was eager to shinny up that pole and the other half wanted to slide back down. I got to the top, prayed, and grabbed both wires in my bare hands. It was a feeling of victory like I'd never felt before in my life."

Doug glanced at his watch. "Oh boy, I'm out of time."

"Glad to have met you, Doug. I'll be praying."

Doug almost ran back to the shop, sure that meeting Bob was no coincidence.

* * * * * *

The foreman was assigning men to replace a hoist limit switch on the highest crane in the shop.

"Let me go on this job," Doug heard himself saying.

"You?" The foreman couldn't hide his surprise. "Well, okay."

As he buckled on his tool belt, Doug felt like a cowboy buckling on his gunbelt. It was shootout time and already the rising tension was threatening to crush his new resolve.

"I do trust you, Lord," he prayed silently, "I'm going to trust you even if it kills me." He realized the incongruity of his prayer and almost smiled to himself. But it was exactly how he felt.

On the way to the job site Doug purposely walked shoulder to shoulder with the other three men rather than bringing up the rear as he usually did.

The climb to the crane was no worse than usual. But, the sickening walk out on the bridge girder to the trolley took all the trust he could muster. Atop the trolley, cutting away the old insulation on the switch, he realized that he had just made a major breakthrough. "Thank you, Lord."

Suspended about ten feet below the trolley where Doug sat was the main hoist block. It was a big pulley with a hook on the bottom, hanging by a dozen steel cables. Just above the block a heavy weight dangled by a cable from the arm of the limit switch they were changing. This weight held the switch in the "on" position. If the block rose enough to lift the weight, the spring-loaded switch would snap "off."

"This new switch has a stronger spring," the lead electrician said. "So we'll have to change the counter weight too."

"How can we get at it?" Doug asked, "It's over a hundred feet above the floor."

"One of us will have to climb down and use the block as a working platform."

"Let me do it," he said impulsively.

"You?" the electrician could no more hide his surprise than the foreman. "Naw, Doug, this is a nasty job. It calls for an experienced man." He started to turn away but Doug grabbed his arm.

"I can do it!"

The other men stopped working to watch the drama unfold.

"Doug, I know what you're trying to prove. You did real good getting out here on the trolley. But if you force yourself out on that block you could fall or you could freeze. I've seen it happen."

"I won't freeze."

"If you fall, you know who gets blamed? Me, for letting you try it."

"I wanna do it!" Doug yelled.

The leader looked to the other men. They nodded their heads affirmatively.

"Go ahead," he sighed.

Doug's heart throbbed crazily as he lowered himself over the side of the girder.

You will keep him in perfect peace.... The Scripture played back in his mind as his feet felt for the lower flange of the girder. There it was. Now he had to turn to face the hoist cables.

Him whose mind is steadfast.... The cables were only three feet away. But to reach them he had to let go. If he reached out and missed he would not be able to regain his balance.

Because he trusts in you. Doug's mind finished the verse. "That's what this is all about, God. Not how scared I am, but do I really trust you?"

He gauged the distance to the cables, let go of his hold on the girder and turned.

"I do!" He said out loud as he reached across and seized a cable in each hand. Then he stepped across the gap to the block. The move caused the block to swing. Panic surged through him like a jolt of current.

"Ride em, cowboy!" someone yelled. There was laughter too. Doug looked up into the grinning faces of his co-workers. Slowly, the panic ebbed away; replaced by a new emotion. Elation! A glorious feeling of high victory. It brought to mind a familiar verse: ***They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings of eagles.***

That's how he felt swinging up there on that lofty perch; like a soaring eagle!

Clarence Trowbridge is a freelance writer who lives in Valparaiso, Indiana.

Feature

The fury within

A woman discusses her previous eating disorder

MaRisa Stevens

Making the track team in my first year of high school was exhilarating. I looked forward to doing something I could be good at. Anything to take me away from my troubles at home.

My mom was living with her boyfriend; he was to be her third husband. He had two sons my age, and they and I fought constantly. Decisions we had no say in were being made. Becoming an instant family left us angry, frustrated, and our home a battlefield.

I was miserable. After dinner I'd take off to be alone at the canal, to practise running short sprints. It seemed to release the tension. One day I got the idea from reading a book about an anorexic girl that I, too, could lose a quick five pounds and still eat whatever I wanted after a fast from food. It felt good to find ways to keep my mind off things.

"To be 'popular' and well liked was something I strived for in school with my peers.... Together we agonized over being fat."

My pulse raced as I stuck my finger deep inside my throat. Gagging made my eyes water. This was disgusting! But I felt accomplishment as the food gushed out. I was horrified, yet happy.

To be "popular" and well liked was something I strived for in school with my peers and teachers. My friends and I worked hard to keep our grades up and stay out of trouble. Together we agonized over being fat. Comparison was normal. We didn't measure up to the ideal bodies which stared out at us from magazine covers.

Nevertheless, we attended frequent weekend parties and attracted the attention of upperclassmen who wanted to date us. Life appeared to be improving and high school was fun.

Looking for escape

"You're so selfish! All you ever think about is yourself." My younger sister would say. My family became upset at my being away all the time to different events and not helping much around the house. My step-brothers did their best to torture me, knowing that at school I was acting like a happy-go-lucky individual and at home I would stay in my room, alone, shutting everyone out. To them I was stuck-up most of the time.

I'd spend time crying and writing in my journal. What was right and wrong didn't matter much. Everybody was doing his or her own thing in order to cope. Emotionally I wanted to escape, too. Deep inside we all wanted to understand why there was so much pain in life.

My mom approved of marijuana and sometimes got my friends high. I didn't like how it felt and went on to try other things.

The trips running to the canal increased. The vomiting got worse, as did the cycle of trying to control my eating. Bingeing episodes were more frequent, as were the days of going without eating.

My track coach noticed my inability to keep up in practice. "Are you alright?" he asked. How I wished I could tell him the truth. I was a ticking time bomb waiting to go off.

Not the only one

It was in a group counselling the next year that I found courage to share my secret. I was surprised to learn it had a name: *bulimia.* I thought I was the only one!

"Millions of people in North America are practising bulimia. Eating disorders usually begin in the early teens, affecting mostly white, middle-class young women. However, these disorders do not discriminate by gender or race. They have become epidemic in our society," the counsellor told us.

"How do you become afflicted with an eating disorder?" asked an older girl.

"The profile varies," said the counsellor. An absent parent. Early abuse. An unstable environment where the child feels out-of-control. Low self-esteem. Putting emphasis on outer self-image."

I listened with relief as my own story fit this profile. Not knowing who my real dad was bothered me the most. Why did he leave my mom and me before I was born? Not even she seemed to know.

Things at home did not change but I kept my hope as I worked summer jobs and kept busy with friends. My eating problem stayed with me. When I couldn't handle the pressures in life, I would eat — large amounts of junk food, in secret, only to quickly throw it all up again. I hoped, with ridding myself of that food, to rid myself of the afflictions in my soul.

UNESCO PHOTO

"When I couldn't handle the pressures in life, I would eat — large amounts of junk food, in secret, only to quickly throw it all up again. I hoped, with ridding myself of that food, to rid myself of the afflictions in my soul."

The obsession to fit into a size five, three, or one ... was really a need to belong, wherever I could fit in. Being a smaller size would alleviate my pain, I believed. *If only I can lose five more pounds I know I will be happy!* This was the lie I tried to tell myself when the pain would return.

Nobody seemed to notice my problem. Then I became so thin that no clothes would fit me. I felt victorious when strangers would stare at my emaciated body. When I would try to eat, nothing stayed. Involuntarily, I was throwing up after even a glass of water.

My mom had me hospitalized. I regained some weight and left when my insurance ran out. I was 16 years old.

Groping toward Jesus

I was good at acting and successful in getting good jobs and dating. But inside I was deteriorating. My health and my spirit were being abused. I tried crying out but there was no one near to hear or listen. Those who did know couldn't understand what my problem was; they offered advice.

When I was a little girl we went to church. We kept a Bible in our home since I can remember. I was taught to pray at meals and before bed. As a teen, I kept these memories hidden and tried my best to keep Jesus real in my life.

But things at home had gotten so far away from God. I gave up believing he could or did care about me or my situation.

Bulimia was robbing me of joy and brought with it depression. Blood would appear after prolonged binges and the purging that followed. I cried out to God to save me yet again as I crawled to the toilet, painfully gorged, and afraid that this time I might die.

"This is the last time," I'd tell myself. It never was.

I couldn't stand what I was becoming but I couldn't stop what I was doing. Soon I was hospitalized again. This time with a mental breakdown. I was 19. I had a chemical imbalance created by an electrolyte disturbance due to so much vomiting and mineral depletion. I was starving my brain and punishing my body. For what? I was trying to become something I wasn't.

I began going to meetings specifically for bulimics at Overeaters Anonymous. Horrified, I discovered women and some men who had been doing this from their early teens and 20s to late into their 30s and 40s.

There would be tragedy, as some people died. They left behind statistics. The cause remained a mystery even to the experts on eating disorders.

Sharing in Christ's body

I began to deal with being molested at the age of nine. I had so much anger and fury inside. Some of the anger was because nothing had been done when I had told my mom about the molestation.

Through therapy and my grandparents' prayers, I decided to fight what I had allowed to enter my soul now eight years previous. The issues hurt. I had been numb for so long. I faced the horrible things I experienced as a child when no one would protect me. The anger, and coming to terms with forgiving, was the only way out. I deeply desired to be made whole and free from this destructive secret that had taken over my life.

Now I am a 27-year-old mother with a little girl of my own. For three wonderful years the bulimia has been gone.

It is my desire to encourage women to become Christ-centred, to avoid focussing so much on self, or on the size of their bodies.

The Body of Christ is what's important. There, there's room for everyone.

MaRisa Stevens is married and has a four-year-old. She is active in her church, North Park Christian Fellowship, in San Diego, Calif.

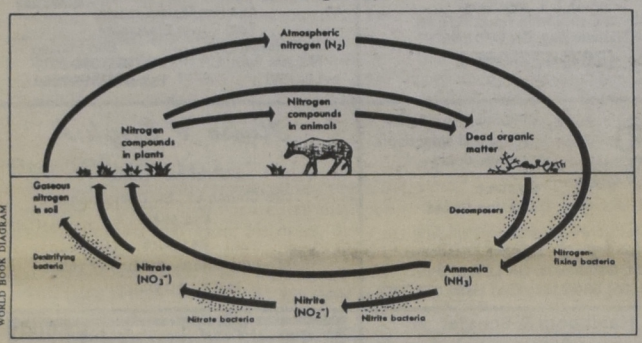
Nitrogen: friend and foe

John Wood

What do Rice Crispies, popcorn, Wheaties and your front lawn have in common?

The answer is nitrogen. It's true that these members of the grass family are also at the very top of the list of plants that feed us. However, as every farmer and gardener knows, it is a dose of nitrogen fertilizer that is the key to their success. Yet hardly one person in 10 could identify the Haber-Bosch chemical process for making fertilizer. And we haven't noticed the consequence of our increasing dependence on this humble product.

The nitrogen cycle



WORLD BOOK DIAGRAM

The invention of ammonia-based fertilizers is a remarkable story that has had rich benefits for humanity. It is estimated that two billion people, roughly one-third of humanity, is alive today because they eat protein grown with artificial fertilizer.

Putting on the pressure

But with this great success has come some unexpected side-effects. The nitrogen pathway through the air, soils and waters of the planet is exceedingly complex. We are finding that there are some environmental costs that we hadn't planned on, but now must live with. The nitrogen connection to a host of larger environmental questions has been hidden from the public, but that may be changing.

Nitrogen is a paradoxical substance. Most of the air we breathe is nitrogen gas, but this common molecule isn't much good to plants. It first must be chemically converted into a plant-usable form. Only a few physical processes or biological organisms can do this. The result is that this element is often a *limiting* substance for plant growth. Hence, the need for us to frequently add fertilizer for green lawns and rich crops. But in this century, chemists and engineers learned to mimic nature and turn out nitrogen fertilizer at will. The process is not easy; it takes a lot of energy to reach the required 500 degrees and 200 atmospheres of pressure for making ammonia from nitrogen gas.

So what *is* the problem? First, we have no substitute for nitrogen. It cannot be replaced by another element; we simply must have the real thing. Second, we have never before had so many people so dependent on an artificial enhanced food supply. and there lies the rub. Excess nitrogen enters the ground water and pollutes some wells. Or it passes into lakes, rivers and the oceans where it makes algae flourish to excess. It rises in the atmosphere and adds to the impact of global warming. It can even hurt the fertility of the very soil it was meant to help.

Farm wastes a problem

Getting rid of feed-lot or barnyard wastes is a major problem on many farms in North America, Europe and around the world. It is easy to overwhelm biological systems with an excess of this plant nutrient. And the rate of growth in nitrogen fertilizer use has been phenomenal, eight-fold from 1960 to 1980. The volume has outplaced human population growth. And as fertilizer use has grown, so have we, literally.

An increased food supply has been a great modern blessing. But it hasn't freed us from paying attention to biblical mandates of letting the land rest. We learned hard lessons earlier this century about our "freedom" to plow the soil as we wished. Now, as we rush to fertilize everything, everywhere, perhaps we have again forgotten the old wisdom. We need to heed the call to give the land a rest. We need to take a longer, more humble view of our tenure on earth.

Another viewpoint

The view of Scripture is long-term. It regularly takes in three or more generations ahead and behind a particular event. But today our planning horizons are foreshortened by what we view as "economic realities" to a cycle of six months to two years. Long-range planning in contemporary terms is said to be about five years.

This will never do for many of our most intractable problems related to ecological processes. We need a longer view, a biblical view. One that looks beyond short-term solutions and asks, "And then what?"

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College in Edmonton.

Ontario pork producers want to safeguard water supplies

GUELPH, Ont. (CFFO) — A majority of surveyed Ontario hog farmers favor the creation of detailed manure storage and usage plans as a means of safeguarding the quality of the province's water supplies.

In a survey conducted at a major Ontario farm show by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), farmers were asked if they believe that municipal "nutrient management plans" are a reasonable way of safeguarding water quality in rural Ontario. Of the 162 farmers filling out the survey, 78 per cent think the plans are a reasonable requirement for livestock producers.

"More municipalities are considering asking livestock farmers to document the details of what they do with their farm's manure," says John Clement, CFFO's secretary to the board. "Our survey shows that most farmers are willing to do their share in providing the public with assurances about their farming practices."

Want peer reviews

The survey showed farmers have some distinct ideas about the process they want to use in developing manure plans for their municipality. A full 93 per cent want individual farmers to develop their own plans, with a panel of other farmers reviewing those plans for environmental responsibility.

"In some municipalities, there is an expectation that professional agricultural consultants must be used to develop these plans," says Bob Bedggood, a pork producer who also serves as a CFFO vice-president. "But our survey shows that farmers are very comfortable with the idea of having to defend their management approach to their peers. It's definitely an approach that municipalities need to consider."

Two remaining questions on the survey asked about other aspects of livestock manure and the environment.

Dealing with manure

The first dealt with whether livestock operations should own a reasonable amount of land for manure usage. The survey showed that 78 per cent of farmers think they should.

"I'm pleased at these results because they reflect well on a policy our Federation recently adopted," says Jasper Vanderbas, a pork producer who also serves on the CFFO executive board. "That policy calls for livestock producers to own at least 50 per cent of the landbase needed to properly utilize manure. The remaining 50 per cent of land would need to be obtained through binding long-term leases."

The remaining question asked farmers whether larger farms should have stricter environmental regulations than small to mid-sized farms. Fifty-seven per cent of surveyed farmers agreed that larger farms should have stricter environmental regulations.

"As a farm organization, we'll need to carefully consider whether larger farms are indeed different," says Elbert van Donkersgoed, the CFFO's research and policy director. "It's a subject that clearly requires more investigation."

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Advice

'Wonderful' husband has secret sex life

Dear P & M:

I have been married to a wonderful man for 15 years. He's a good family leader. He is cheerful, encouraging, ambitious, patient and kind. He is a blessing to our family, church, school and community. Loving him is no problem.

Every three or four months he secretly "falls" by using telephone sex. I see it on the telephone bill. I ask him about it and we talk. This has gone on for years. I'm not sure that I'm doing the right thing. I have questions but dare not talk about it with anyone.

Why does it hurt me? What should I do besides pray for him? Is this a problem in other Christian homes? Does he need counselling? Do we?

Dear Telephone Sex:

It is said that the most important sex organ is the brain. A person who engages in telephone sex is using this sex organ, his mind, to have one-night-stands with anonymous sex partners. This constitutes adultery and promiscuity, two sexual sins which destroy the intimacy and trust on which healthy marital unions rely. Simply said, each time your husband "falls" he is unfaithful to you. The hurt you feel is the hurt of betrayal.

From your description your husband has a sexual addiction. In other words, he has a compulsion over which he has little or no control. Even though he appears to stay "on the wagon" for several months at a time, he inevitably resorts to a telephone encounter with a woman hired for that purpose.

The founder of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) writes: "Addictions are like internal hurricanes. Periodic lulls may occur, but a tidal onslaught may occur at any time." In between the times that he falls, your husband is probably pre-occupied with his struggle, moving through a constantly recurring cycle of temptation, sin, guilt, confession and abstinence. We would not be surprised to discover that there is more to your husband's furtive sex life.

With the help of a Christian counsellor your husband needs to look at two places for an understanding of his behavior. First, he needs to look at his early formative sexual experiences and emotional history to learn when and why his double sex life developed. Secondly, he needs to look at your marriage to understand why he finds sexual relief elsewhere at the risk of distancing himself from you.

Sexual problems are also spiritual problems. James warns against "double mindedness" and tells us to "get rid of all moral filth" (1:8,21). Hebrews reminds us to keep the marriage bed pure (13:4). Paul tells us to "live by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Gal. 5:16). And Jesus, seeking to protect our marriages from lust, that leads to adultery, which leads to divorce, says we're better off gouging out an eye or cutting off a hand than going to hell with our whole bodies (Matt. 5:27-30).

You are not alone and his problem is not rare. The fact that pornographic magazines, videos and telephone sex lines are a multi-billion dollar industry should tell you how many consumers there must be. The Promise Keepers men's organization has surveyed those attending some of its events and learned that more than 50 per cent of these men were exposed to some form of pornography in the previous week.

What should you do besides pray? Acknowledge that your husband, his good traits notwithstanding, has a serious problem which hurts you and disappoints God. You've written us. That indicates that you may be ready to ask yourself some tough questions. Is it possible that you have been too passive, too acquiescent? Have you denied the severity of the problem? Have you tolerated, even excused his intolerable behavior? Have you been afraid to really confront him at the risk of angering him?

If your answer is Yes to any of these questions, it's time to change your tactics and insist on an exclusive partnership on every level: emotional, spiritual and sexual. You may want to use this column as a starting point with your husband. Personal counselling will also support you and help you understand what's going on.

We recommend the following books. Laurie Hall's *An Affair of the Mind,* published by Focus On the Family and available at Christian bookstores, is a woman's brave account of her struggle to battle her husband's obsession with pornography and illicit sex. The 12-step text of SLAA, entitled "Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous," includes many personal accounts of sexual obsession and provides helpful insights and methods for combatting the problem. This book can be purchased and the organization contacted at: Ontario SLAA, 599B Yonge St., Suite 324, Toronto, ON M4Y 1Z4; or phone them at: (416) 486-8201.

God bless and help us all in the struggle to make every thought, even our sexual fantasies and desires, obedient to Christ (II Cor. 10:5).

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON, L2N 5V6

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Witvoet.

Ukrainian students experience life in Iowa

Jim De Young

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa — Ten Ukrainian college students from Kharkov Pedagogical University made Sioux Center, Iowa, their home during the month of July. The students, along with two of their instructors, attended the Dordt College Summer English Language and Culture Institute (SELCI).

Arriving in Sioux Center just in time to enjoy Independence Day picnics and fireworks with their American hosts, the students were immersed in formal SELCI activities which began on July 7. The Ukrainians lived with Sioux Center families, while their days were filled with classes on the Dordt campus and frequent excursions to experience various aspects of American culture.

Classes included language study, but students also got many opportunities to stretch their vocabulary and practise their usage in classes on such things as computers, the Bible, Midwestern arts and crafts, and Native American history.

Varied field trips

SELCI organizers also planned field trips for the participants, who discovered art museums, the Hiawatha Festival at Pipestone National Monument, and De Soto Bend wildlife refuge. They also attended a worship service at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Sioux City.

SELCI director Suzanne Kok explains that SELCI is designed to increase English language proficiency, introduce students to American and Midwestern history and culture, and give them the experience of being part of the community.

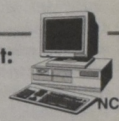
To give students further insight into life in the Midwest, Kok and other planners devised the Community Involvement Program (CIP). Two or three times a week, CIP brought the students into contact with Sioux Center residents who showed them an insider's view of various aspects of the community, such as work and industry, social and recreational activities, and educational and religious institutions. After small groups of students met with CIP presenters, they prepared oral reports on what they learned, to share with the rest of the group.

Mutual learning

"The Community Involvement Program is a great way to have a mutual learning experience," says Kok. "The students learn about our culture as we learn about them."

SELCI is an outgrowth of Dordt's ongoing relationship with the Kharkov Pedagogical University. Since 1993 Dordt has sent teams of professors and students to teach English language and culture at the Ukrainian school. This year's SELCI was viewed as a trial run; college officials hope that it will be repeated in future years, possibly involving another group from Ukraine, students from Dordt's sister college in Korea, or students from other countries or immigrant groups.

Office equipment: Fiction or FACT



Fiction: The heating and cooling cycles associated with turning your computer on and off can be damaging.

Fact: Switching your machine off for several hours when you're not using it does no harm at all. In fact, turning off your computer actually extends its life. Most major PC manufacturers now insist that their employees turn off their computers at the end of each day.

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Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.,

b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is *not* acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.

c) Photographs sent by fax *are not* acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.

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Marriages

VANDER PLOEG/HENDERSON:

Mr. and Mrs. John and Anna Vander Ploeg of R.R. 1, Shallow Lake, Ont., are pleased to announce the upcoming wedding of their son

RICHARD
to
TANIA

daughter of Mr. Rick Henderson of Owen Sound, Ont.

The celebration of this special event will take place, the Lord willing, on Friday, Aug. 29, 1997, at 4:30 p.m., at First United Church, 435 21st Street West, Owen Sound, Ont.

Future address: R.R. 6, Owen Sound, ON N4K 5N8

Anniversaries

1972 1997

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness" (Col. 2:6-7).

With praise and thanksgiving to God we announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents

MARINUS and ELIZABETH KOOLE
(nee HAAK)

on Sept. 1, 1997.

Maria & John Bajema — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Natasha, Mark

Arie & Diane Koole — St. Catharines, Ont.
Matthew, Brandon, Charles

Linda & Jan Van Barneveld — Woodstock, Ont.
Jeremy, Jennifer, Justin, Dan, Renee, Jason, Johanna, Sarah

Frances & Leo Versluis — Port Dalhousie, Ont.
Alex

Ron & Ginny Koole — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Jason, Katie, Lucas

Nancy & Tom Postma — Jacksonville, Fla.
Jacqueline, Jason, Kimberley

Heather Koole — Grand Rapids, Mich.

Philip Koole — Jordan Station, Ont.

We thank them for their love and support and pray for God's continued guidance in their lives.

You are invited to an open house in their honor on Saturday, Aug. 30, 1997, from 2-5 p.m., at the residence of Marinus and Elizabeth Koole, 2225 Walnut Point, Jordan Station, ON L0R 1S0

Phone: (905) 562-5771.

Best wishes only please.

Congratulations to Marinus and Elizabeth Koole on their 25th wedding anniversary!

Anniversaries

1942 August 28 1997

"I will counsel you and watch over you" (Ps. 32:8b).

With praise and thanks to God, we, the children, grandchildren and great-grandchild wish them a beautiful day on their 55th wedding anniversary.

JOHN and HERMINA STEGEMAN
(nee VELTINK)

Mom and Dad, Oma and Opa, we pray that the Lord will bless you for each other and your children in the coming year.

A family gathering will be held in their honor.

Home address: 398 Vine St., Apt. 203, St. Catharines, ON L2M 3S2

Anniversaries

Congratulations to John and Hermina Stegeman on their 55th anniversary!

Anniversaries

1962 July 27 1997

St. Catharines, Ont.

We celebrate the goodness of God in the 35th wedding anniversary of our parents

BILL and GRACE VAN EGMOND

Congratulations Dad and Mom (Opa and Oma).

Richard & Debbie VanEgmond
Jeremy, Sonja, Jonathan, Michael

Dennis VanEgmond
Justin

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold..." (Ps. 84:11).

Address: Bill and Grace VanEgmond, 2 Princeway Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2N 2X6

Cornwall Oshawa
1967 August 5 1997

"The Lord will keep you from all harm —
He will watch over your life;
The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forever more" (Ps.121:7-8).

With much joy and thanksgiving to the Lord we hope to celebrate the 30th wedding anniversary of our parents

HANS and SADIE VAN MANEN
(nee VANDERVEER)

We pray that God will continue to bless you and surround you with His love.

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for everything that you have done and continue to do for us. You are a blessing to us.

With much love from your children, David & Jane, Rick, Sara, and Rob.

Home address: 744 Glengrove Street, Oshawa, ON L1J 5C4

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Classifieds

Anniversaries

Congratulations to Herbert and Map Zylstra on their 50th anniversary!

Obituaries

PETER VERKAIK

age 85, passed away to be with the Lord on July 29, 1997.

Born on Aug. 31, 1911, in the Netherlands, he immigrated to Canada at the age of 13. He married Nelly Rupke in 1940 and raised a family of seven children in Bradford (Springdale),Ont. In 1974 he and Nelly moved to Eustis, Fla. He was a founding member of the Bradford, Ont., Springdale Chr. Ref. Church, and of late was a member of Rolling Hills Community Church in Zellwood, Fla.

He is survived by his wife Nelly, one brother Anthony, and three sisters, Betsy Horlings, Agnus Van Dyke and Anne Mol. He is also survived by his seven children, 24 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Surviving children:

George & Corrie Verkaik — Eustis, Fla.
John & Joyce Verkaik — Eustis, Fla.
Robert & Lynda Verkaik — Eustis, Fla.
Linda Cripps — Mt. Dora, Fla.
Deanna Noteboom — Grand Rapids, Mich.
Peter & Bette Verkaik — Pottersville, N.Y.
Edward & Marcia Verkaik — Grand Rapids, Mich.

"For we are confident... (that) to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

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Miscellaneous

Attention: All churches Please inform us of important changes. Items under "Church News" will be included free of charge.

Anniversaries

Koudekerk a/d Rijn Sarnia
the Neth. Ont.
1947 August 19 1997

"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way" (Exodus 23:20a).

With thanks to God for guarding and blessing them for these 50 years together, we joyfully announce the wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents. May He continue to bless and keep you in His care. With love and congratulations, from your children and grandchildren.

HERBERT and MAP ZYLSTRA
(nee MAAT)

Betty & Peter Verdun — Sarnia
Jonathan, Charlotte, Christine
Auke & Denise Zylstra — Sarnia
Tina & Rudy, Connie, Lorraine
Mickey & Larry Turley — Sarnia
Steve, Jeff, Heather, Brian, Jesse, Kevin, Danny
Brian & Brenda Zylstra — Sarnia
Chris, Trevor, Michael, Steven
Wybe & Annette Zylstra — Sarnia
Shannon, Sean
Case & Irene Zylstra — Sarnia
Laura, Mark
Herb & Barb Zylstra — Sarnia
Herb Jr., Kristyn, Matthew
Gary Zylstra & Nicole (friend) — Corunna
Courtney, Nicholas, Court, Alisha, Brittney

Open house on Aug. 23, 1997, Second Chr. Ref. Church, Sarnia, Ont., at 7 p.m. Best wishes only. Home address: 1227 Amsterdam Crt., Sarnia, ON N7S 3X6. Phone (519) 383-6170.

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Calls declined:

— Hope CRC, Port Perry, Ont., **Candidate Robert Loerts.**

Calls accepted:

— Bethany CRC, Fenwick, Ont., **Candidate Robert Loerts.**

Available for call:

— As a follow-up to the May 13, 1997, Classis Hamilton meeting, the Council of Faith CRC of Burlington, Ont., announces that **Rev. Peter Veltman** is available for call. This announcement is made in accordance with Article 17C of the Church Order.

— The Council of Hope CRC of Port Perry, Ont., continues in its recommendation of **Pastor Ken Van Schelden** to the churches of our denomination. Rev. Van Schelden may be contacted at 1-205 Chestnut St. E., Whitby, ON L1N 2Y1; phone (905)665-9565.

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Miscellaneous

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Classifieds

Obituaries

Wartena, Fr. Morrisburg
the Neth. Ont.
Oct. 20, 1923 - July 20, 1997

"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and salvation" (Ps.62:5).

In his 74th year,

HENDRIK (HENRY) VANDERMEER

went home to be with his Lord.

Loving husband of Akke Bruining (Vanderveen) and the late Elsie Hofstra.

Dear father of:
Louis (Christine) Vandermeer — Huntsville
Neil (Christine) Vandermeer — Iroquois
Henry (Desiree) Vandermeer — Iroquois
Claire (Jerry) Haayema — Williamsburg

Dear step-father of:
Wietze 'Dick' (Audrey) Bruining — Ingleside
Ykje 'Edith' (John) Tibben — Brinston
Heine (Anne) Bruining — Newington
Greta (Robert) Griffin — Calumet Island, Que.
Anne (John) VanderGeest — Pembroke
Bonnie (Will) Brunsveld — Newington
Dorothy (Jeff) DeVries — Brockville

Dear brother of Wietze of the Netherlands. Sadly missed by 14 grandchildren, 28 step-grandchildren, and three step-great-grandchildren. Also survived by nieces and nephews.

Our comfort is that Jesus gained the victory in his life and that he is now with his Savior.

The funeral was held at the Williamsburg Chr. Ref. Church on Tuesday, July 22, 1997, Rev. G. Rowaan officiated.

Miscellaneous

Events

Events

Events

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

Aug. 17 Dutch worship service led by Rev. P. Van Egmond, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Sept. 28 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J. Hoytema, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

Nov. 7 Christian Festival Concert by the 100-voice choir and concert band of the Ont. Chr. Music Assembly, with special guests from Europe, under the direction of Leendert Kooij. At 8 p.m., Royal Thomson Hall, **Toronto**, Ont. For tickets/info. call (416) 636-9779 (#).

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Lakewood Christian Campground

Come to Lakewood Christian Campground on **Thursday, August 21, 1997,** for **SENIOR DAY.** Coffee will be ready, along with goodies. The program will begin at **10 a.m.** The **speaker** will be **Rev. Eric Pennings** from Strathroy, Ont. Come and meet old friends, enjoy the program and games. Remember to bring your lunch and lawn chair.

Miscellaneous

Support Reformed Faith Witness (RFW)

Mission Statement: *Reformed Faith Witness is a Christian ministry committed to communicate biblical perspectives on current and world events in accordance with Reformed traditions.*

Make a donation for 1997!

Reformed Faith Witness, the new publisher of *Christian Courier*, is a charitable organization which received tax exempt status from Revenue Canada.

Please consider making a financial gift for 1997. All contributions will be used to help *Christian Courier* and the cause of Reformed Christian journalism. Send your cheque and complete the coupon below and we will issue an official receipt. Thank you very much!

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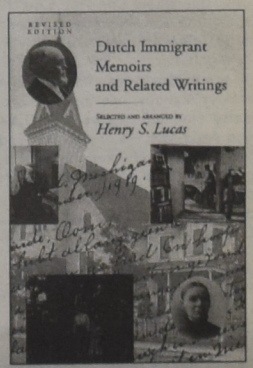

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Questions & Answers

Are there air conditioners other than window room air conditioners for homes without ductwork?

(NC)—There are several air conditioning system options available to meet this requirement:

• Multi-split systems are intended for permanent installation and include up to three indoor evaporator units connected to a single outdoor condenser section. This permits three separate areas or zones to be cooled independently. It is generally much easier to retrofit the interconnecting refrigerant lines and control wiring than to install an air distribution system.

• One type of portable room air conditioner is not intended for window (or wall) installation. Instead, it sits on the floor and may be rolled on its casters into whichever room it is needed. Some of these portables reject condenser heat into a tank of water contained within the cabinet, which must be periodically replenished with cold water.

• Certain central air conditioning systems are specifically designed for houses without air distribution systems. These systems use small diameter air ducts that lend themselves to retrofit installation in walls, ceilings and floors. The small ducts require a special high-pressure air distribution fan to overcome the higher resistance to airflow.

To receive a free *Air Conditioning Your Home* booklet, call Natural Resources Canada toll-free at 1-800-387-2000. Fax: (819) 994-1498.

HEATING & COOLING

The ins and outs of weatherstripping

HOME RENOVATION

(NC)—Weatherstripping is used on moving surfaces such as window sashes, doors and attic hatches. Properly applied, it should ensure an airtight fit while still allowing for easy opening and closing.

The type of weatherstripping you apply depends on the type of surface you are sealing, the area you are applying it to, and the size of the gap you are sealing.

• When a door, window sash or hatch closes against weatherstripping, it creates a pressure seal. A pressure seal is used for hinged doors and windows and for attic hatches.

• When weatherstripping is in constant contact with the closed part of a frame, sash, face or edge of a door or window, it makes a sliding seal. This seal is used for all sliding doors and windows.

• You should use a sweepstyle seal across the bottom of your door.

Caulking and weatherstripping alone can decrease your heating bills by 5 to 15 per cent, and you will notice an immediate difference in comfort.

For more information on how to make your home more comfortable and energy-efficient, call Natural Resources Canada toll-free at 1-800-387-2000 (in Ottawa, call 995-2943), or write to Energy Publications c/o Canada Communication Group, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0S9, and ask for the free booklet called *Keeping the Heat In.* Copies can also be obtained in the RenoSense Planning Centre at your nearest Home Hardware Store.

10 questions to ask your builder

(NC)—If you're in the market for a new home, make sure you get answers to these 10 questions before putting your money down:

1. Since all builders must meet the requirements of the building code, what makes your homes different from everyone else's?
2. Do you build according to the leading technology and research in the field?
3. What steps do you take to improve the energy efficiency of the homes you build?
4. Can you predict what my energy costs will be?
5. What makes your homes more environmentally friendly?
6. My family's health is very important to me. What assurance can you give me about the air quality of your homes?
7. Is your company a member of the New Home Warranty Program?
8. Are your homes endorsed by the Government of Canada and utility companies?
9. Do independent, licensed professionals certify the quality of your homes?
10. Have you been trained to build R-2000 Homes? Have you built any R-2000 Homes?

If the builders you're talking to can't answer these questions positively and satisfactorily, try calling your local home builders' association or 1-800-387-2000 for a list of certified R-2000 builders in your area. They have the know-how to build you the best house that money can buy. Without question!

Running an energy-efficient home office

HOME Office

(NC)—How you operate computer equipment can have a big impact on energy consumption. Here are some tips on running a lean, mean, energy-efficient home computer system:

• If you have fallen into the habit of leaving equipment running when it's not in use, now is a good time to change the way you work. Computers, monitors, printers and copiers all burn up energy and your hard-earned money. If you must leave your computer on, to receive e-mail, for example, turn your monitor off.

• Set yourself up to communicate electronically using your PC and a modem. This will reduce paper consumption and save you money.

• Take advantage of power management devices that automatically turn equipment on and off as required. They'll save energy and reduce the wear and tear on your machine. They'll also help keep your computer area cooler.

• Try storing information electronically. If you must add a hard or CD-ROM drive, choose the internal option. External drives require their own power supply, which increases energy usage.

• Recycle as much of your supplies as possible. Buy recycled paper and printer cartridges, and when the time comes to replace your PC, consider donating it to a school, or find out if the manufacturer accepts their used products back.

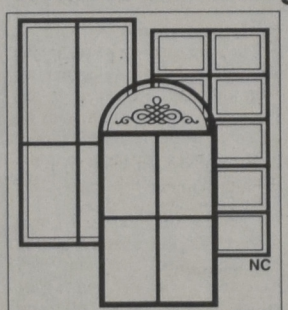
For more information about how to purchase and operate an energy-efficient home computer system, write to Energy Publications, c/o Canada Communication Group, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0S9, or check the Internet at http://eeb-dee.nrcan.gc.ca.

Buying windows: What is the energy rating?

(NC)—If you're shopping for new windows, the Energy Rating (ER) will help you select an energy-efficient product. ERs are calculated using Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards and calculations that average the conditions of a typical home in Canada.

A positive ER means the window is adding more heat to the house in the winter than it loses, while a negative rating means the window is a net heat loser. A window with an ER of zero loses as much heat as it gains over the heating season. As a result, it will have little impact on the house's annual fuel consumption.

ERs can vary widely depending upon the type of window. For example, windows that open and close have more air leakage and therefore a lower and less desirable ER. Fixed windows, those that do not open or shut, are generally tighter, with slimmer frames and higher ERs.



How can you obtain the ER for windows you are considering? Most manufacturers will give it to you, but to be sure the number is accurate, consult the Canadian Window and Door Manufacturers Association (CWDMA) certification label. The new *National Energy Code for Houses* recommends an ER of -13 or better for most regions in Canada, with an ER of -24 at the low end of the energy efficiency scale and positive ERs at the high end.

The CWDMA certification program, which started in 1994, is supported by Natural Resources Canada and other government and industry partners. The CWDMA label confirms that the ER has been verified through independent audits. The label also tells you if the window passed a forced entry test and rates its operational performance in three categories: airtightness (the "A" rating), watertightness (the "B" rating") and wind resistance (the "C" rating). The higher the numbers, the better the performance.

For more information on CWDMA certification, call (613) 233-9804. You can also order a copy of *Consumer's Guide to Buying Energy-Efficient Windows and Doors* from Natural Resources Canada at 1-800-387-2000.

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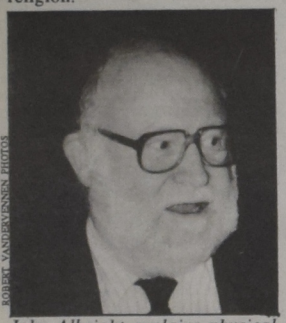
Professors meet to discuss science-religion courses

Robert VanderVennen

TORONTO — The universe is unbelievably complex at the pre-biotic level; that is, in astronomical, physical and chemical terms, physicist John Albright of Purdue University recently told 75 college and university teachers who are now teaching courses that connect science and religion.



ROBERT VANDERVENNEN PHOTOS

John Albright explains physical complexity at the conference.

The occasion was a five-day conference at Victoria University sponsored by the Templeton Foundation to stimulate and equip professors to teach interdisciplinary courses in science and religion.

This complexity is good, said Albright, because it is a requirement for life and a sign of divinity. It also is an enormous hurdle for people who wish to promote a naturalistic evolutionary picture of origins. This comes in the context of recent activity spurred by Michael Behe and Philip Johnson on the concept of "intelligent design" as a key to how our world came to exist, in contrast to evolution.

The conference follows last summer's Templeton conference which had the same aim. One of four such gatherings this year, conference director Thaddeus Trenn focused on the history and philosophy of science, with evolution as a secondary theme.

Teaching methods were a constant counterpart in the conference for professors who had never before taught a science-religion course.

Among those who attended the conference were John McTaggart of The King's University College, Wayne Norman of Redeemer College, and Vaden House of the Institute for Christian Studies.

Misinterpreted history

In a major address David Lindberg of the University of Wisconsin showed the value of a historical approach through a case study of the famous story of the conflict between Galileo and the Catholic Inquisition.

Lindberg showed that the controversy was not between science and faith, since many church leaders did not object to Galileo's ideas, while many scientists rejected them. A major issue was Galileo's personality and his willingness to offend churchmen. It was not really a battle between science and Christianity at all.

In a formal response to Lindberg's presentation, Ernan McMullin of Notre Dame University added that the central issue was the proper way to interpret Scripture, and even more importantly, who had the authority to interpret it. Galileo's way of interpreting the Bible was not controversial — it was similar to Augustine's. It had always been clear to the church that there could be no contradiction between science and Scripture.

Ernan McMullin (left) and conference organizer Thaddeus Trenn enjoy a discussion at the Templeton conference.

Michael Ruse of the University of Guelph spoke on naturalism in science, making a distinction between methodological naturalism, essentially meaning that the world runs by law, and metaphysical naturalism, that there is no God, only nature.

In his response McMullin said that naturalism goes as far back as Aristotle. When Aristotelianism was introduced to the West, the church at first rejected it because it seemed that Aristotle's world was completely self-contained and left no room for God.

Feminist Margaret Wertheim of Berkeley, Calif., said in her address that the study of physics goes back to Pythagoras, who was sexist because he believed that the world is unchanging, which she identified as a male idea.

Aristotle won

The contrast to Pythagoras was Aristotle, whose arguments won the day. However, it has been as hard for women to be admitted to the study of science as it has been for them to attain leadership positions in the church, she added.

Concern was expressed that science-religion courses not be one-shot "hits," but that they have some extensive and lasting effect on college and university studies. The increased attendance at this conference from last year by Canadian professors suggests that these faith-based courses are gaining popularity in Canada as well as in the U.S.

Calvin biology prof testifies to U.S. Congress

Marian Van Til, with files by Phil De Haan

WASHINGTON, D.C. — "Human cloning significantly threatens [the] uniqueness, respect and freedom" of human beings and "should not be left as a new reproductive liberty, nor solely as professional guidelines with voluntary compliance," asserted Calvin College biology professor Hessel Bouma III to the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Technology on July 22. The subcommittee is part of the congressional Committee on Science.

The House subcommittee was holding hearings on prohibiting federal funding of human cloning research. Bouma was brought to the House committee's attention by Vernon Ehlers of Grand Rapids, Mich., a member of the subcommittee, and a member of the Christian Reformed Church. The subcommittee's talks included a discussion of Ehler-sponsored Bill H.R. 922, the Human Cloning Research Prohibition Act.

Earlier this summer, Ehlers had asked Bouma and his Calvin College colleagues John Hare and Ruth Groenhout, ethicists in Calvin's philosophy department, to review his and other legislative drafts concerning human cloning. The professors wrote a three-page summary of their observations which the congressional science committee felt was persuasive enough to warrant further discussion. Thus Bouma's invitation to come to Washington.

Freedom needs limits

Bouma identified himself to the subcommittee of 11 Republicans and nine Democrats as "a deeply committed Christian — a Protestant in the Reformed tradition," though he said that the moral and ethical concerns he expressed "are not uniquely religious in nature."

Bouma argued against human cloning research because, whether we see ourselves as created image-bearers of God or as the pinnacle of evolution, he said, "Human beings are unique" and elicit "special awe and respect, even reverence." Human freedom, however, has to be limited when it comes at the expense of another, and human cloning would need such limits.

Bouma said a ban on the use of federal funds for research on human cloning would be an effective means of restricting such cloning, but only if a national and international consensus can be achieved that such research is undesirable, and only if the legislation is accompanied by "sufficiently clear and severe penalties to make it unlikely that anyone will be tempted to violate [it]."

Bouma was allowed to make a written submission with no length limits, and was given five minutes to orally summarize his submission. Bouma was one of four witnesses to testify on July 22. The others were specialists in endocrinology and fertility, and biopharmaceuticals.

Bouma's written testimony can be found on the U.S. House of Representative's web page at: www.house.gov/science/welcome.htm.

News Digest

Afghan religious police restrict women's rights

AFGHANISTAN (Reuters) — Afghanistan's fundamentalist Islamic religious police have issued new rules restricting women's access to aid, and ordering them to avoid making noise with their shoes when they visit hospitals. The new rules, issued in July, require aid agencies to get special permission from the department to employ or assist women. The rules sent to hospitals ban women from visiting male patients in wards that contain non-family members, and outlaw make-up, jewelry and shoes with heels that make a noise when walking.

Dead Sea Scrolls stored at villa

JERUSALEM (AP) — An archaeologist says the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found was not the library of a Jewish sect, as a traditional theory holds, but a wealthy nobleman's villa. Yizhar Hirschfeld, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told a conference of international scholars recently that he believes the scrolls, found 50 years ago at Qumram near the Dead Sea, were taken from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem to protect them from an impending Roman invasion. His theory contradicts the widely held view that Qumram was the library of the secretive Essene sect, known to have lived along the Dead Sea's shores and believed to have buried the scrolls. But other scholars at the conference criticized Hirschfeld's hypothesis.

Spiderman attacks

VANCOUVER (CP) — A burglar with Spiderman's swing entered a Vancouver apartment from a 14th-floor balcony in July. Mike Marchessault and girlfriend Nicole Van Veenendaal awoke at 3 a.m. to find a man in their apartment.

"I came running out of bed, but by then he was out on the balcony," says Marchessault. "He was hanging onto the edge of our balcony and swinging down to the one below." The couple are among at least six victims of a burglar who apparently climbs the outside of apartment buildings in Vancouver's west end.